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THE EVOLUTION OF TECHNIC
IN ELIZABETHAN TRAGEDY

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BY

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To

*My most helpful critic and
friend*

ASHLEY HORACE THORNDIKE, PH.D., L.H.D.

*An inspirer of students
A leader among scholars*

A GENTLEMAN

*Of broad judgment
Of high and exacting ideals
Of unfailing patience with
All who aim at honest work*

Prefatory Note

I wish to recognize my debt to members of the Faculty
of the Department of English and Comparative Literature
of Columbia University for suggestions on the manuscript
of this thesis; to Professor George Philip Krapp and Pro-
fessor Harry Morgan Ayers, who read the earlier chapters,
and to Dr. Earnest Hunter Wright, who read the proof of
all but the last, making comments here and there, especially
on the phraseology. I have tried to express what I owe to
Professor Ashley Horace Thorndike by dedicating the book
to him, under whose inspiration and stimulating criticism it
was written.

The bibliographical list appended is of necessity brief, and
of necessity consists only of names of texts and of general
books of reference, since the direction of the investigation
is new. I have attempted to deal with phenomena at first
hand. There is one treatise, however, that could not but
have had influence on my deductions, since it has long been
a standard and is practically the only exhaustive study of
the general subject of dramatic structure, namely, Freytag's
Die Technik des Dramas. Though I differ materially from
it in the analysis of Shakespeare's plays, I gladly admit
whatever obligation there may be.

—Harriott Ely Fansler.

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Introduction

We shall attempt to trace in this study the coming into existence of a technic in Elizabethan tragedy, an evolution that best demonstrates itself in Shakespeare's plays. We shall therefore be concerned for the most part with him; but, in preparation for him, with the plays immediately preceding and with the elements handed down from the Middle Ages. What we shall need to inquire into will not be the make-up of any one tragedy in itself, but in its relation to other tragedies, and for the evidence it gives of an advancing technic—the employment by its author of points of structure that critics nowadays consider essential to a well-built tragedy.

An inquiry into the technic of tragedy at any time resolves itself fundamentally into an inquiry concerning the attention of audiences and dramatists to parts of the play. If we know what an audience wants in a particular place and period, we can almost certainly tell what the dramatist will give it. The relationship is obviously reciprocal. Likewise, if we know what a people has had repeatedly, we may know what it has wanted. For instance, by studying the structure of dramas that have from time to time pleased the English people, we should be in a fair way to find out the English people's idea of what drama is, and what that idea has forced on the makers in the building up of their

pieces. And that is what we are seeking to discover in this study: not what the critics have said that tragedies ought to be, but what tragedies have been. What the English-speaking people has demanded, that it will continue to demand in a greater or less degree; for a specific dramatic pleasure, like any other pleasure when once enjoyed by a large body of people, is not willingly foregone. It is demanded in repetition or in essence, in fact or in interpretation, in strict continuity or at intervals thereafter.

The present day gives evidence that we are coming to a new age of tragedy, but in some ways it will be very much like the Elizabethan. It will not care for sentimentality. The greatest modern drama with its horrifying catastrophe is in direct line with the Elizabethan-Senecan-revenge-motive plays. Ibsen's "Ghosts" is but a more refined serving-up of Thyestes's children. "Ghosts" is a scientific play, but its tenet is still an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." The drama of our age is nearer the Elizabethan than any other just because we recognize facts. We may be subjective and the wits of the Mermaid may have been in many cases entirely objective, but together we and they are concerned with the same overwhelming phenomenon— the significance and fulness of life. "Ghosts" is evidence in this contention. Our future tragedy may develop in opposition to the Elizabethan, but it will not necessarily therefore be entirely different, despite the seeming paradox.

This statement, like many other general statements, will be seen to be true if one only give it a wide enough application. Shakespearean tragedy came to take in the essentials of Greek tragedy with all the additions of Elizabethan tech-

nic: the word "Lear" summed up the ages. The statement will be seen to be true likewise, if one only give it a narrow enough application: the remarkable popularity of "Hamlet" on the stage today attests the fact that the ordinary play-goer enjoys to the full what sophisticated persons call the crudest as well as what they call the finest of Elizabethan pleasures—the thrill occasioned by stage supernaturalism and the quiet glow of participation in contemplative philoso-phizing.

The term evolution, signifying gradual modification and differentiation, would very well express the history of Eng-lish tragedy, as it would very well express the history of any other type of literature, if only the terms "type" and "evolution" were not so misleading as they are; if critics themselves did not forget that when they so speak they are dealing with abstractions, with ideas, with the evolution of concepts. Now, a man's idea of tragedy may grow, a nation's idea may grow according to the number of trag-edies it witnesses, yet each individual play that has helped to make up that idea remains unchanged, and is a particular phenomenon insusceptible of variation when once abandoned by its author. If a man consider three plays and assert that the third is not a tragedy, he must admit, unless the first two plays are exactly alike, that he has brought into the decision a fourth element—his ideal tragedy, or his idea of tragedy. Whether he got it by reading criticisms and imported it as a wooden measuring rod, or whether he originated it out of his own judgments upon similars and dissimilars in the plays before him, it is yet a fourth factor in the decision; and, though it is potent for the future, it is purely mental.

This idea does not affect the three finished plays a whit:
they remain exactly what they were, particular phenomena.
But if the critic be also a playwright, this new idea at which
he has arrived affects his next production; and, if this same
idea as to what is and what is not tragedy gets abroad
thoroughly among a people, the conception is accompanied
with a good many particular tragedies somewhat like the
first two plays from which the critic got his standard.

The critic and the public must both admit that the
measuring rod is mental. If they do not, they get into the
futile argument as to whether or not types exist, as to
whether or not "Macbeth" is "perfect" tragedy; forgetting
that a type, whatever its characteristics, is a generic and
purely idealistic thing, existing nowhere outside the mind.
As soon as a play is created, it is a particular phenomenon,
to be dealt with mainly as such. It is worse than futile,
therefore, it is a confession of ignorance, to call upon a
critic to point out in actual existence his ideal tragedy, to
presume that he can be taunted with the fact that no two
plays are exactly alike. If they were, they would not be
two, but one—to use a philosophical Hibernicism—and we
should not then think of a type. I might almost have said,
we should not then think; for thinking is *typing* (if I may
coin an expression), and, although a natural process, is not
necessarily therefore an easy one. But if English tragedy
itself be an abstraction, what about the technic of English
tragedy? I leave that delectable suggestion to those who do
not believe in types. I turn instead to a confession of faith.

I believe that there is such an intellectual thing as the
technic of tragedy, and that it can be understood aside from

the plays from which it is abstracted; and that one may appreciate technic who can not write a play; and that often those who wrote plays (Marlowe and Shakespeare) did not fully appreciate their own technic; and that one who understands technic can write a fairly acceptable play (Bulwer Lytton's "Richelieu") though he have not more than one spark of genius in him; and that a great genius may fail to write an acceptable play (Wordsworth and Coleridge) because he ignores dramatic necessities; and that the mightiest dramatic genius (Robert Browning) may fail to arrive at being the author of a series of great plays because of the incapability of his times to furnish him discipline.

Yet, though abstraction is both natural and permissible—since a dream that we all dream together is no dream—I prefer to treat the subject of technic as concretely as possible. I want to stay as close to the history of English tragedy as may be, and to follow, if I can, the progress of the Elizabethan playwrights from emphasis to emphasis in the structure of their pieces, until the reader of this book has, if together we can evoke it, a somewhat complete idea of the by no means simple architectonics of English tragedy.

It is obvious to even the most unthinking play-goer that there are a number of points of structure that the public today considers essential to all serious drama, especially to tragedy. We demand some striking and memorable scenes, and one particularly strong situation toward which the whole action tends. We ask for a clear dramatic motive, and distinct personalities, who informingly characterize themselves by their deeds. We expect one of the deeds to be a destiny-determiner for the chief contestant in the

tragic struggle—to be, as it were, inevitable and yet to be
of such a nature that the contestant need not have done it
if he had not so willed. We like to recognize the point
where he begins to think of this deed as possible, or where
circumstances begin to close in around him so as to induce
the frame of mind that brings the deed. We like to recog-
nize his chief opponent also and to witness the success or
failure of the one or the other or both at the end of the
play. And finally, we want the whole struggle to mean
something.

How these demands have come about in English tragedy
and what significance they bear structurally it is now our
pleasure to inquire. We shall proceed so far as possible
chronologically, with a glance forward or back, as the case
may demand, for enlightenment by comparisons. We shall
try in each chapter to take a forward step, studying the
new dramatic point or the advanced emphasis with some
exclusiveness. We shall remember the while, however, that
after the attainment of an excellence, not all the dramatists
moved forward; in fact, that many remained behind or
reverted, and, moreover, that, although we can study but
one point of structure at a time, others may be present in
the tragedy under consideration either as inheritances from
the past or as foreshadowings of the future. But what we
are tracing here is the consciousness of the points. The
reader must not be disturbed because we seem to move for-
ward backwards. That is the way the Elizabethans moved—
with their eyes fixed on the catastrophe.

The Evolution of Technic in Elizabethan Tragedy

Chapter I

Tragic Situations

In our study of the origin and development of technic in English tragedy, as for as its culmination in Shakespeare, we shall naturally have much to do with the early Elizabethan drama; but before we enter upon that complex material, it is proper to stop to ask: "What were the inheritances from the past?" What did the Elizabethans start with? We know that they demanded in most of their plays good story and striking situations. Where had they become accustomed to these? The answer is easy. If not elsewhere, surely in the miracle cycles and the moralities of the preceding three centuries.

The most original fact about the religious plays in England was their combination into collective series. This idea of completeness in the history of man, of a collective mystery from Creation to Doomsday, was a contribution of the English mind. It was a magnificent conception, in fine keeping with the sublimity of the subject; but dramatically, of course, it was destined to failure. The presentation of the individual plays as moving pageants tended

toward fragmentary effect, and the succession of different sets of performers all but totally dissipated the central idea of unity. Hence the introduction of trivial incidents and adventitious characters. Hence also the fixing of attention on situation. The fact that the personages of the moralities were abstractions tended to the same result. The spectator was not solicitous about the general effect of the whole play, but only desirous that the incidents be stirring and the action vivid.

That much of the popular expansion of the Biblical narratives tended to the comic is undisputed; but the question is, just how much? Whether a given incident was meant to be comic or merely realistic is hard at the present day to prove. Just where, for the fifteenth century audience, did the ranting of Herod, for instance, or the actions of the torturers of Jesus on the way to the crucifixion pass from the tragic to the comic? The assertion has been made that these were meant for comic elements. May they not have been seriously intended altogether for tragic?[1]

It has been said that there is no tragedy in the liturgical drama, since there was no tragic intention. All was to end happily. The serious situations are at best only pathetic. In a large sense this judgment is true also of the popular miracle cycles; for after the "Crucifixion" comes the "Resurrection." Even in the "Slaughter of the Innocents" the one in whom we are interested escapes; while in the "Doomsday" it is only the wicked who are punished. But, as said before, the effect of the cycles was almost of neces-

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[1] I have seen the Passion Play acted in the Philippines with the same popular expansion, but none of the incidents were received as comic, though there was much ranting in delivery.

sity fragmentary, and the individual pageants were enjoyed separate. Hence one set of incidents might be comic and another tragic without incongruity. Indeed, we need not · look for congruity in the early religious plays, when it was not until the second half of the seventeenth century that comedy was deliberately excluded from high tragedy. Moreover, that the audience of the miracle plays did not take such or such a situation as funny, one would be slow to say, especially after an experience at a New York theater during a Sothern-Marlowe presentation of "Twelfth Night," when the episode of Sebastian's reception by Olivia (which was meant apparently to be serious comedy) was turned into farce both by the actors and the audience.

In general the miracle situations appear to have been arranged with serious intent by their authors, and to have been received so by the onlookers. What by some persons might be considered as artistically ideal tragedy and what through the ages has been accepted as tragedy, may be two quite different things. An analysis of the early church drama certainly reveals many of the elements of later accepted tragedy—motives such as pride, tyranny, and revenge; characteristic personages, such as evil spirits and tyrants, pathetic children and heartbroken mothers. Satan and Herod look toward Tamburlaine, Faustus, and Macbeth not only in rôles, but often in content of speeches. Note in the "Massacre of the Innocents" of the York cycle how Herod vents his anger on the messenger of bad news as Macbeth vents his:

Herod.—"Fy! on þe, ladde, þou lyes!

.   .   .   .   .

Herod.—"Thou lyes false traytoure strange,
　　　　Loke nevere þou negh me nere
　　　　Upon liffe and lyme
　　　　May I that traitour fange
　　　　Full high I shall gar him hunge
　　　　Both þe harlott and hym."

Herod's situation at the escape of Jesus is much like Mac-beth's at the escape of Fleance:

Herod.—"So may þat boy fladde,
　　　　For in waste have ye wrought;
　　　　Or that same ladde be sought
　　　　Shall I never byde in bedde."

In the "Coming of the Three Kings" in the York and Chester cycles, Herod is like Tamburlaine, ranting and bragging in terrific terms. In the Towneley and Coventry *"Oblacio Magorum"* and the "Adoration of the Magi," he is like Macbeth again, disturbed about "the boy" that shall push him from his throne. In the one Herod bewails his fate as Macbeth bewails his at times:

Herod.—"Alas, that ever I suld be knyght,
　　　　Or holdyn man of mekylle myght,
　　　　If a lad shuld reyfe me my ryght,
　　　　Alle thus me fro."

In the other with a false show of confidence like Mac-beth's "What's the boy Malcolm! Was he not born of woman?" Herod tries to brave the thing out:

Herod.—"A fy, fy, on talys that I have been tolde.

　　　　·　　·　　·　　·　　·

> How Xulde a barn wax so bolde
>   Be bestys yf he born be?
> He is *young* and I am *olde,*
>   An hardy kyng of hye degre!"

Eve, in the York play, is a good tragic character. After Adam's cowardly babblings her dignified acceptance of the results of her wrong-doing reminds us of Lady Macbeth's high-headed and quiet-mouthed dying:

> "Be still, Adam, and namen it na mere
>   it may not mend.
> For wel I wate I have done wrange,
> Alas; the whille I leve so lange,
>   dede wolde I be!"

In the Coventry play, it is Adam who is heroic. He makes a fine speech:

> "Lave woman, turn thi thought . . .
>
>   .   .   .   .   .
> Let us walk forth into the londe
>   With ryth gret labour oure fode to finde,
> With delvying and dyggyng with myn hand
>   Our blysse to bale and care to-pynde."

In the Chester cycle both Adam and Eve are cowards.

Not a few of the mystery scenes in their make-up and stage business also curiously anticipate later ones. Compare, for instance, the journey to Calvary with its weeping women, disciples, and the folk come out to see, with Richard Second's progress to the tower. Compare the horrible realism of the Crucifixion with Edward Second's torture; or the appearance of Death at Herod's revel with that of

Banquo's ghost at Macbeth's; or Herod's appropriation by
the demons with that of Faustus's. Much of all this is im-
posed by the source; but so is much of the dramatic business
in later tragedy.

Before we leave Herod, I cannot forbear to quote him
in what is surely a tragic situation in the "Slaughter of
the Innocents" (Chester) where he discovers that the sol-
diers in carrying out his orders to the letter have killed
his sons. He says:

> "He was righte sicker in silke araye,
> In gold and pearle that was so gaye,
> He mighte well knowe by his araye,
> He was a kinges sonne." . . .

And the stricken father cries out to the woman attendant:

> "Could thou not speake, could thou not praie,
> And saie it was my sonne?"

It was a bold hand like Marlowe's or Kyd's that drew
the character of Cain in the "Mactatio Abel" of the Towne-
ley cycle. Cain is depicted as a virile, coarse pessimist and
rebel, and his deed of murder is well motived. A not unim-
pressive scene is that where he counts out the poorer sheaves
one by one. In this play, too, as Abel dies he calls for
vengeance like later brothers and fathers in English tragedy.
I do not mean to intimate that this is the source of the
Elizabethan revenge motive, but it is interesting to notice
an early emphasis here before the Senecan influence came
into England. A stage-horror device that we are likely
to accord wholly to later developed Senecan tragedy (we
have it even in "Hamlet") is found here likewise—namely,

the dragging of the dead body about on the stage. Cain finds it difficult to hide his brother's corpse. That this conception was not necessarily suggested by the source is testified to by the fact that it is absent from the same play in the other three cycles. There are a few laments in those but we find no other tragic treatment.

The Towneley "Abraham" and the Digby "Magdalene" surely are examples of liberal handling. Let us look at them somewhat closely; then take up the "Remorse of Judas," which yields the most tragic situation of all the church plays; and, finally, after noting realistic scenes in the "Crucifixion," pass on to the Moralities.

Abraham and Isaac. When one speaks of tragedy in the mysteries, the play that comes first to mind is probably the "Abraham and Isaac"; but this in all the versions is rather pathetic than highly tragic except perhaps in the York. The Coventry version opens rather prettily with a scene revealing the love between father and son. Abraham exults over God's goodness to him, especially in giving him Isaac, whom he loves most dearly. He kisses the boy and warns him always to obey God. The boy prays a blessing on the father in return. Then Abraham utters praise once more for his son and asserts that "no man loves bettyr his childe than Isaac is loved of me." The climax is well prepared for by the emphasis on this love and by Abraham's announcement that he will always obey his God, whatever the commandment. Then comes the commandment. This emphasis of doctrine suggests ecclesiastical handling. The father, although he is loth to kill the son, never hesitates. The child, too, is willing and anxious to be sacrificed. There is a fine natural touch,

however, in a speech of Isaac's as he and Abraham go up the hill:

> "Ffayr fadyr, ze go right stylle,
> I pray zou, fadyr, speke onto me."

The York and Chester versions likewise show ecclesiastical influence. The Towneley version is much more simple, hence much more impressive. The child is a natural child, speaks like one. He is naïve and sweet, and when he finds that his father means to kill him, he is frightened. The author of the Towneley play knew children at first hand, and fathers too. His Isaac is a typical child, not a typical Isaac. We are charmed with the lad's first words:

Abraham.—Isaac, son, where art thou?

> *Isaac.*—Alle redy, fader, lo me here;
> Now was I cumying unto you;
> I luf you mekille, fader dere.

Abraham.—And dos thou so? I wold wit how
> Lufes thou me, son, as thou has saide.

> *Isaac.*—Yei, fader, with alle myn hart,
> More than alle that ever was maide;
> God hold me long your life in quart.

Another excellent touch that reveals the author's understanding of human nature comes in the father's falsehood to his son or what must have seemed to Abraham a direct deception when he uttered it. He has told Isaac to be ready, and Isaac announces that he is now and always ready to do his father's bidding. In his perturbation Abraham says:

"My dere son, look thou have no dred,
    We shall come home with grete lovyng,
  Both to and fro, I shal us lede,
    Com now, son, in my blyssing."

This scene calls to mind that of Caratach and little Hengo in Beaumont and Fletcher's "Bonduca," where the rugged old soldier stoutly asserts exact knowledge of "the blessedest place," to which the poor little weary and starving child must go.

As I say, the Towneley author was interested in his characters as such. Ecclesiasticism is forgotten in the pathos of the situation. Notice the absolute childlikeness in the appeal and notice the sweetness of the boy's disposition:

Isaac.—Fader!
Abraham.—What, son?
  Isaac.—Think on thi get,
        What have I done?

Abraham.—Truly, none ille.
  Isaac.—And shall be slayn?
Abraham.—So have I het.
  Isaac.—Sir, what may help?
Abraham.—Certes, no skille.
  Isaac.—I ask mercy.
Abraham.—That may not let.
  Isaac.—When I am dede, and closed in clay,
        Who shall then be your son?

Abraham.—A, Lord, that I shuld abide this day!
  Isaac.—Sir, who shall do that I was won?
Abraham.—Speke no siche wordes, son, I the pray.
  Isaac.—Shall ye me slo?

Abraham.—I trow I mon.
          Lyg stille, I smyte.
   Isaac.—Sir, let me say.
Abraham.—Now, my dere child, thou may not shon.
   Isaac.—The shynyng of youre bright blayde
          It gars me quake for ferd to dee.
Abraham.—Ther for groflynges thou shall be layde,
          Then when I striyke thou shall not se.
   Isaac.—What have I done, fader, what have I saide?
Abraham.—Truly no kuns ille to me.
   Isaac.—And thus gyiltles shalle be arrayde?
Abraham.—Now, good son, let siche words be,
   Isaac.—I luf you ay.
Abraham.—So do I thee.
   Isaac.—Fader!
Abraham.—What, son?
   Isaac.—Let now be seyn
          For my moder luf.
Abraham.—Let be! Let be!

The poor old man can stand the appeal no longer. He makes the excuse that he has forgotten something and goes aside to weep. He says that he would die for the child, and cries out in his agony:

> "What shal I to hys moder say?"

The mother-motive is found in the Coventry and Chester, likewise, and in the Brome version.

In the York play, Isaac is thirty years old. The pathetic emphasis is consequently entirely changed; we are in a sense nearer the tragic. Both father and son appreciate the situation: we hear the strong man Isaac, who could easily save himself, begging his father to bind him, lest in the

shock of the actual blow his body revolt. His provision is the greatest bravery.

Mary Magdalene. Aside from Christ and the traitor in the Scripture narrative, the character with the most dramatic possibilities is Mary Magdalene. Her emotional nature and her devotion to the Saviour make her prominent. She appears in all the cycles more or less conspicuously. The most important of all English dramatic treatments of the story before 1560, and the first English treatment in which allegorical machinery is employed, is the "Mary Magdalene" play of the Digby Mysteries.

It is in two parts: Part I, besides a good deal about Herod and Pilate, covers the presentation of Mary's father Cyrus and his death; her seduction by Lechery and a gallant; her repentance and wiping of Jesus' feet; and her brother Lazarus' again-rising. Part II includes Christ's appearance to Mary at the Sepulchre; her conversion of the King and Queen of Marcylle; the feeding of her by angels from heaven in the wilderness; her death.

Scenes 8, 9, 10, 11 (Part I) trace her downfall. Lechery tempts her by flattery to leave home and seek experience abroad. She bids good-bye to Lazarus and Martha, and we next find her in a tavern, where occur very realistic scenes. She yields to a smart gallant and is lost. The steps are marked. (1) She calls him in, (2) lets him make love to her, (3) dances with him, (4) drinks with him, (5) promises to go to the end of the world with him. Scene 10 is a connecting scene and was, perhaps, spectacular. It is in Hell. The bad angel announces Mary's fall. Scene II finds her in an arbor singing to her "Valentynes," her "byrd

swetyng," her "lovys dere." From this abandonment she is
awakened by the good angel, who warns her to seek healing
for her soul, and she accordingly repents and determines
to go to Christ. Were this not a Bible story, Mary might
be carried off by the bad angels even despite her repentance,
as Faustus was. But Scene 14 presents her at Simon's
house, washing with her tears Christ's feet and drying them
with her hair, and incurring the anger of Judas by breaking
the box of precious ointment. This scene is almost purely
tragic because of the high seriousness in the tone, and be-
cause of the shame of the woman. Her brother Lazarus'
again-rising is preceded, of course, by the death scene, in
which are the corpse, the wailing neighbors, and the sorrow-
ing sisters—incidents and elements all common to later
tragedy.

Part II contains in the first division the weeping of the
women at Christ's tomb, the tragic consternation of Mary
when she finds the body gone, the lamenting of the disciples,
and the revelation to Mary of the risen Christ. The Digby
author has caught the dramatic simplicity of the Scripture
narrative and gives but the two words: "O Mari!" The
tension once more raises this scene near to the tragic.

Part II contains in its second division at least two tragic
situations: one for Mary and one for the king.

(1) Mary, the messenger of "good news" to Marcylle,
sits in an old lodge without the gate, hungry, tired,
neglected, ineffectual. She has come a long way to convert
the king, and he has seemingly given her more to do than
she is able to accomplish, has asked for a greater proof of
the power of her God than she feels sure of manifesting.

(2) The other situation has one of the elements of old Greek tragedy. As a condition of his acceptance of the new religion the king had demanded of Mary that his wife should bear him a child. He gets the assurance of his desire, and in gratitude sets out to go to the Holy Land to be baptized of Peter. Daring to bargain with the Supreme Power he has forgotten, however, his own impuissance. His boon is attended with the utmost sorrow: a storm overtakes the ship on which he has embarked with his queen, and she dies in premature child-birth. Among the rude sailors he is alone with the dead wife and the helpless infant. The men insist that the corpse be thrown overboard to allay the storm. He calls on his new God. He begs the sailors to be merciful. They finally agree to place the body with the child beside it on a rock that rises up nearby out of the sea. The King says:

> "ly here, wyff, and chyld fe by.
> blyssyd maydleyn, be hyr rede!
> with terys wepyng, and grett cause why,
> I kyss you both in þis sted.
> Now woll I pray to Mary myld
> to be þer gyde her."   (ll. 1792-1797)

The ship then continues on its way to the Holy Land.

The naïve conception of verisimilitude is interesting. How the ship, in danger of being dashed to pieces by the waves, could stop at the rock is not clear. A generous taking of the story as it is, however, was surely as commendable at that early date as later, when Shakespeare, in what has been called his part of the "Pericles" play, had the very same situation of the weeping husband and father, the new-born

babe, and the dead wife cast overboard to allay the storm, with the added tax on credulity of the later scene when the coffin was thrown upon the shore by the waves and the wife was brought to life again.

The Remorse of Judas. The life of Judas offers the best opportunity for tragedy in the general conception of the term: the struggling of a soul through a series of experiences that end for him in misfortune and death. Catastrophe brought on by one's own misdeeds is the essence of tragedy. We find the York mysteries presenting Judas, not as we might expect from later developments of the miser in the Barabas type, but as an ordinarily good man yielding to a besetting sin, indulgence in which is followed by remorse and a pitiful, though dignified because self-imposed, death. Of course, the authors are guided by the Scripture narrative; but it is interesting to note that they seek a dramatic motive for Judas's treason in an emphasis of his irritation over the master's indifference to Mary's extravagance with the precious ointment. This feeling is in the Towneley as well as in the other cycles.

If the authors had had any conception of the action of a tragedy, they might readily enough have gathered up the Judas incidents that are scattered through the presentation of the life of Christ, and have put these into the form of an introduction, or the first half, to what they had already written—the second half of a real play. In other words, "The Remorse of Judas," now found embodied in the Cokis and Waterlederer's mystery of the "Second Accusation Before Pilate" in the York cycles, is an actual part of a possible, well-constructed drama.

Jesus has been sent to Herod, and while Pilate and his court wait the return of the victim, Judas enters, talking to himself. He says:

> "Alas! for woo þat I was wrought
>   Or evere I come be kynde or kynne,
> I banne þe bonys me furth brought,
>   Woo worthe þe wombe þat I bredde ynne,
>   So may I bidde.
> For I so falsely did to hym
>   þat unto me grete kyndnesse kidde."

Then he remembers that he may yet save his Master and friend. He goes up to Pilate, and the following dialogue ensues, in which Judas reaps the full reward of his deed—retribution in a sense more tragic than that which befell Macbeth. They both have betrayed a kind friend. They both know that they must die for the treachery; but Macbeth, because he is overcome materially; Judas, because he is conquered spiritually. He really loved his master, and, now that the spasm of cupidity is gone, he realizes that his own heart is broken. There is nothing for him to do but to hang himself; yet he recks that fact but little. The tragedy for him lies in the realization that he cannot now save his friend.

Judas.—My tydyngis are teneful, I telle you,
       Sir Pilate, þerfore I you praye,
       My Mastir that I gune selle you,
       Gode lorde, late hym wende on his way.
Kaiph.—May, nedelyngis, Judas, þat we denye,
       What mynde or mater has moved þe þus?
Judas.—Sir, I have synned ful grevously,
       Betraied þat right-wisse bloode, Jesus
              And master myne.

Kaiph.—Bewscher, what is þat till us,
   þe perill and þe plight is thyne.
  Thyne is þe wronge, þou wroughte it,
   þou hight us full trewlye to take hym,
  And oures is þe bargayne, we boughte it,
   Loo! we are alle sente for to slee hym.

Judas.—Allas! þat may me rewe full ill,
  Giffe ye assente hym for to slaa.

Pilate.—Why, what wolde þou at we did þer-till?

Judas.—I praie you good lorde, late hym gaa,
  And here is of me youre paymente playne.

Kaiph.—Naie, we will noght so,
  We bought hym for he schulde be slayne;
  To slee hym þi selffe þou assent it.
   þis wate þou wondirly wele,
  What right is nowe to repente it,
   þou schapist þi selffe un-seele.

None of them will listen to Judas; they tell him to walk
out. He prays them to take the money and spare Jesus.
Pilate scornfully refuses, and taunts him with his treachery.
Judas says:

   "I knawe my trespasse and my gilte
   It is so grete, it garres me grise,
   Me is full woo he schulde be spilte,
   Might I hym save of any wise,
    Wele were me þan
   Save hym, sirs, to your service
    I will me bynde to be your man.
   Youre bonde-man, lorde, to be
   Nowe evere will I bynde me,
   Sir Pilate, ye may trowe me,
   Full faithfull shall ye fynde me.

Pilate.—Fynde þe faithfull? A! foule mot þe falle!
       Thi maistir's bloode þou biddist us save,
       And þou was firste þat did him treasonne."

So Judas has his punishment!

Comparable to the tragic irony of the "mouth-honor" so distasteful to Macbeth is the tragic irony of the blood-money to Judas. He does not want it now. Since it will not buy back his master, he loathes it. The earlier Judas would have kept it, if for nothing else than to defray the expense of the new halter with which he means to hang himself. But the lost soul sees things clearly. Earth values have passed. The taking and giving of money have no significance now. The intention is all, as he has long since realized, and as his scorners do not fail to insist.

An almost Æschylean touch is added to this little drama in what might be called the epilogue, a scene embodying the superstitious dread of the other people in regard to the thirty shillings. Judas is indifferent to them; but they are portentous to Pilate and Kaiphas. And I dare say that when the announcement was made that the money should not go into the treasury, but should be used to buy a potter's field, something not far from a thrill of anticipatory horror struck more than one heart among the poorer portion of the onlookers at the English pageant:

       "Pilgrims and palmers to putte þere,
        And other false felons þat we for-fare."

Crucifixion. Before leaving the mysteries we will notice the "Crucifixion," and mention by the way a few isolated facts; namely, that the slaughter of the innocents apparently

took place on the stage, as did also the death of Herod in the Towneley, as well as that of his infant son, and the death of Adolescens (whom Lamech slays), and the racking of Christ. In the last, the realism of the conversation enhances the horror. The York play is the most elaborate. There are one hundred fifty-two lines of nervous, crude, running comment on the work as it proceeds—stichomythia.

After the soldiers have ordered Jesus to lie down and bend his "back upon this tree," and one man has taken his right hand, and another his left, a third his limbs, a fourth his head, and are setting out with speed to accomplish the fastening, they find to their dismay that the body is too short: "It failis a foste and more." (l. 107.) Two of the men are concerned: they fear that their work must be done over; but the third says:

> "Why carpe ye so? Faste on a corde,
> And tugge hym to, by toppe and taile."

They comment and struggle for forty lines, and finally accomplish the horrid work to the breaking of the sinews: "Zan, assundir are both sinews and veins, on like a side; so have we soughte." (l. 148.)

But they must yet carry him to the top of the hill, and "hym hyng on heghte þat men myght see." They discuss whether four men are enough for the weight. They make a great ado about the lifting:

> *Mil.*—Lifte uppe!
> > *Mil.*—Latte see!
> > > *Mil.*—Owe! lifte a-lang.

> *Mil.*—Fro all þis harme he schulde hym hyde,
>   And he was God.

A touch of dràmatic irony.

The situation is repeated when they start on again after resting. But the most realistic horror comes when they lift the cross up high and let it fall suddenly into the mortise so as to jolt. Finding that the hole is too big, they set to work to fix the upright with wedges, hammering them in and jesting the while at the man on the cross above. They repeat his prophecies to him, and then leave him—to "make mowes on the mone." (l. 286.)

The lamentation scene of the "Maria Magdalene" and "Maria Virgo" in the Coventry Cycle is more dignified and impressive than many similar elegiac scenes in Elizabethan tragedy.

Of deep pathos, likewise,—the kind that Shakespeare considered worthy of tragedy—we have an example in the Coventry "Burial of Christ," where Maria Virgo kisses the bloody face of her son:

> A, mercy! mercy myn owyn son so dere,
>   Thi bloody face now I must kysse!
> Thi face is pale, withowtyn chere!
>   Of meche joy now xal I misse!
> Ther was nevyr modyr that sey this,
>   So her son dyspoyled with so grete wo:
> And my dere chylde nevyr did amys,—
>   A, mercy! fadyr of hefne, it xulde be so!

Considering the time, surely one feels that the conception and treatment here displayed do not compare unfavorably

even with the greatest, even with that of the last scene in
one of the greatest of all English dramas, where the broken
old king hangs over the sweet dead body of his beloved
Cordelia.

Early Moralities. "The Castle of Perseverance," the earli-
est complete extant morality, has for its theme the spiritual
history of Mankind, as the Miracle cycles had the spiritual
history of the world.   The whole tone of the play is serious,
and there are here and there tragic moments.   Indeed the
play may be said to end in a catastrophe, since Mankind
sinks into hell.   (He is saved only by the Catholic dispensa-
tion of the mass.)   The play opens with the world
(Mundus), the Flesh (Caro), and the Devil (Belial), each
making announcement of his dominion.   The Good and Bad
Angels contend for the alliance of Mankind, and Bad Angel
wins by promising Mankind wealth along with worldly pleas-
ure.   This conquest ends what might be called the "intro-
duction," and the "action" begins immediately—Mankind's
struggle with the world.   By and by Good Angel says:

> "Mankind has forsakyn me!   (l. 451)
> Alas, man, for love of the!
> Ya, for this gamyn and this gle
> Thow shalt grocehyn and grone."

The world wins step by step until Mankind is "With
sevene synys sadde be-set," and is defiant of good:

> "Mekyl myr þe I mone in mynde,   (l. 1245)
> With melody at my mow þis met;
> My proud pouer schal I not ende,
> tyl I be putte in peynys pyt,
>   to helle hent fro hens.

> "In dale of dole, tyle we are downe
> We schule be clad in a gay gowne:
> I see no man but þey use somme
>   of þese vij dedly synnys."   (1. 1253)

A not inappropriate comment on the world.

As the story goes, this is a tragic situation. Good Angel
says (1. 1290), "Alas! Mankinde is bobbyt and blent as þe
blynde!" . . . "Alas! Mankynde is soylyd and saggyd in
synne!"

Good Angel and Shrift, however, with the aid of Penance,
get Mankind into the Castle of Perseverance. (1. 1693.)
Here he is exhorted by the forces of Good. The tragic situ-
ation comes when, lured by his old enemy Covetousness,
Mankind decides to leave the Castle of Perseverance:

> "I forsake þe Castle of Perseverance:
> In coveytyse I wyl me hyle,
> For to gete sum sustynaunce."

To the reproach of Good Angel, to the effect that Mankind
is being allowed to destroy himself, Meekness says:

> "Good Angel, what my I do þer-to?   (1. 2558)
>   hymselfe may his soule spylle,
> Mankynde, to don what he wyl do,
>   God hath zonyn hym a fre wylle."

This is the tragedy, of course,—that he insists on his own
will and sells himself to worldly pleasure. He sinks so low
that he says (1. 2775):

> "If I myth al-wey dwellyn in prosperyte,
>   Lord God, þan wel were me!
> I wolde, þe medys, forsake þee
>   & nevere to comyn in hevene."

Death assails Mankind, and Mankind is not ready, no
more than was Faustus. Death and Mankind meet face to
face (1. 2843), and I take it that the combat was as real and
as tragic to the audience as was that between Macbeth and
his adversary at the final struggle. And, ironic justice!
here stands the boy "I-know-not-who" to reap Mankind's
wealth, as later there stood the boy Malcolm to appropriate
Macbeth's crown. But Mankind, after all, is more like
Faustus in his death; for he sinks to hell crying on the
world to help him:

> "Werld, werld! have me in mende!   (l. 2853)
> Good syr Werld! helpe now Mankinde!"

A Morality of Wisdom Who is Christ. "A Morality of
Wisdom Who is Christ" (c. 1450) is midway between "The
Castle of Perseverance" (c. 1425) and "Mankind" (c. 1475),
in date and composition. In effectiveness the pieces range in
the same order. "Mankind" is the weakest. There is no
tragic situation in "Wisdom," however, unless the bare
shadow summed up in ll. 520-527 be one. Lucifer, dressed
as a dandy, has been angling for Mind, Will, and Under-
standing. He has caught them, and now stands chuckling
over his success. He says:

> "Of my dysyere, now have I summe;
> Wer onys brought into custume,
> Then farewell, consyens! he wer clumme,
>   I xulde have all my wyll.

> "Resone I have made bothe deffe and dumme,
> Grace ys owt, and put a-rome;
> Wethyr I wyll have, he xall cum,
>   So at þe last I xall hym spyll."

This is like Iago's incisive scorn: "Work, my medicine, work! Thus credulous Fools are caught."

Mankind. "The handling of its subject shows us," says Pollard, "that in 'Mankind' the morality play is approaching its sixteenth century degradation." The play was written, he says, for strolling actors, a fact that partly accounts for its low tone. After Pollard's analysis,[1] it is scarcely worth while to talk of tragic situations. Mercy and Mankind, the only serious characters in the play, are made laughing stocks at once by the other characters and by the author. If the play were written in good earnest as a morality, the tragic situations would come where (1) Mankind gives up his spade (l. 542): "Here I gyf uppe my spade for now and forever"; and (2) where, ashamed of his life, he cries:

> "A rope! a rope! I am not worthy!"

Perhaps line 720 would be tragic, where wretched Mankind puts off his monitor until another time: "to morne or the next day." This scene of a rope is a favorite one in later plays. Hieronimo is discovered on the stage with a rope; and Achitophel in "David and Bethsabe" shows the rope with which he is going to hang himself like Judas before him, despite the seemingly mixed dates.

Mundus et Infans. "Mundus et Infans" has a simple, straightforward plot: the Worlde, Conscyence, Folye, and Perseverance in turn try to direct Infans, who is successively called Wanton, Lust, and Lykynge, Manhode, Shame, and Age. The theme is like that of most of the moralities—life and salvation:

[1] The Macro Plays: Early English Text Society, Extra series 91.

> "Folye before and same behynde,—
>   So, syrs, thus fareth the Worlde alwaye !"

<div align="right">(ll. 698-699)</div>

The pathetic situation comes in line 713, where conscience, deserted by his ward, who is setting out to London to seek Folye, says:

> "Saye, Manhode, friende, whyder wyll ye go?"

He goes to destruction; and, in line 767, he moans his lot (Enter Manhode, old and broken):

> "Alas! alas! that me is wo!
>   My life, my lykynge I have forlorne."
>   "Folye hath gyven me a name;   (l. 828)
>   So where-ever I go
>   He clypped me Shame,
>   Now Manhode is gone,
>   Folye hath followed me so."

Everyman. "Everyman" is exceedingly dramatic. It increases in effectiveness, until at the last episode, after all his fellows have deserted him, Everyman goes into the grave alone, with only Good Deeds to speak for him. What shall be presented is chosen by the morality writer with more than usual insight. Instead of beginning back at Everyman's birth, the play starts at the tragic moment: when the soul is called to account.

The action consists in continued invitation and refusal, refusal on the part of former companions to go with Everyman on his long journey. To one seeing the play acted, the cumulative effect is very impressive. But the most striking situations are the first and the last. A high school pupil

who saw the Ben Greet company present "Everyman" in Chicago said that he should never forget the thrill that he felt at the words,

> "Everyman, stand still! Whyder arte thou goynge
> Thus gayle? Hast thou thy maker forgete?"—

words which are uttered by the awful figure of Death, who confronts Everyman just as he is apparently leaving the scene, in the full flush of worldly joy—the pert feather in his cap, the silk cloak over his shoulder, the lute under his arm. I dare say that such was the impression on the Tudor audience.

The next most striking situation, as has been said, is the last, where those qualities which one persists in thinking will stay with one, desert Everyman: Five Wits, Beauty, Dyscrecyon, even Knowledge, slip away. Good Deeds can help Everyman only into his grave, and at best say:

> "Shorte our ends and mynys be our payne,
> Let us go and never come agayne."

One can hardly assert that the day of the moralities is over, when New York audiences crowd to see "Everywoman."

The Disobedient Child. Contrary to the usual prodigal-son story, "The Disobedient Child" ends unhappily, thereby at once suggesting tragedy. Nevertheless, the situations are those of comedy; for, however unpleasant to the young man may be the prospect of living with his termagant wife, we feel, as does his father, that the headstrong youth deserves the experience. We may yield him an aphorism, but not a tear. Indeed, the purpose of the play is didactic; and with

its structural merits, its good verse and realistic dialogue, it asserts itself as an early example of satiric comedy, rather than as a promise of tragedy.

The Nice Wanton. Along with the "Disobedient Child" the "Nice Wanton" is a vigorous antecedent of the corrective drama of manners as well as in theme and some situations an antecedent of domestic tragedies. It, too, ends unhappily. The theme is announced in the prologue: "He that spareth the rod, the chylde doth hate." The element of the tragic, much more apparent than in the "Disobedient Child," is worked out in the lives of the mother, the daughter, and one son. The action consists in the progress to shame of Ismael and Delila. The promise of the catastrophe comes in line 39, where the two children cast away their books and turn to pastime.

The preparation for the mother's grief and attempted suicide is clearly made in the sketch of her character given in lines 95-140, where she is highly indignant at the accusation against her children, and refuses to investigate. We rather rejoice in her independence in showing the gossip the door, and have a warm spot in our hearts for her when she fusses over her children's material welfare:

"Nay, by this the poor soules be come from scole wery,
 I will go get them meate to make them mery."

But we cannot forgive her negligence of their spiritual good —for we have met the young people, and can understand Eulalia's prophecy.

The singing and card-playing scene well contrasts with the impending catastrophe, and emphasizes it. Here occur

the deeds that shall immediately react. The next scene
shows their reaction, and is the beginning of the catastrophe.

A tragic situation, really melodramatic, is reflected in the
words of Delila in line 292: "To tell you who I am, I dare
not for shame." She has come in, ragged, disfigured, and
halting on a staff. Her brother is a somewhat more lovable
character than when the audience heard him last in the un-
gracious office of back-biting. He sees the wretched woman
and undertakes to comfort her. He has unwittingly called
her "sister":

> "Shew me your name, sister, I you pray,
>   And I will help you now at your neede:
>   Both body and soule wyl I fede,"

She answers:

> "You have named me already, if I durst be so bold,
>   Your sister Delila, that wreche I am."

The trial of Ismael and Iniquity is not tragedy; it is some-
thing else, although the two are condemned to be hanged.
But a trial scene is in line with later English drama.

In the "Nice Wanton" the mother's sorrow is what is
most tragic. She attempts to kill herself. An extremely
pathetic speech is her utterance when the neighbors report
to her her son's condemnation. With quickened imagination
she sees his death:

> "My dere son Ismael hanged up in chaines—
>   Alas, the wynd waveth his yellow lockes!"

For penetrative simplicity this last line seems worthy to be
put beside Emilia's reply to her husband in the great Othello

catastrophe: "Perchance, Iago, I will ne'er go home!" or beside the Duchess of Malfi's charge to her maid when the executioners have already entered the room:

> "I pray thee, look thou giv'st my little boy
>   Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl
>   Say her prayers ere she sleep."

In summary, then, it may be said that in the mystery plays and in the moralities up to 1560 there are a number of elements found in later tragedy. Especially are the older plays good in situations. Some vivid and intense scenes have their after-types even today. Before Senecan influence became manifest in English tragedy, English audiences were accustomed to acted scenes presenting a not inconsiderable amount of realistic spectacle and making a strong emotional appeal.

Some of those scenes may be tabulated thus:

A murderous tyrant showing fear of a successor.

An apparition at a revel.

Appropriation by demons.

Pathos scenes with children in them.

Weeping and lamentation scenes.

A murderer trying to hide the body of the victim.

Tragic mental struggle and conflict, emphasized with irony.

Elaborate catastrophe with torture.

Chapter II

The Catastrophe

It is indisputable that much of the structure, or lack of structure, that early Elizabethan dramas display was imposed by the stories behind the action; but surely that fact is one of all dramas from "Agamemnon" to "Macbeth," and from "Romeo and Juliet" to "Paolo and Francesca." The conscious artist like Schiller struggles with his sources and subdues them to an extent; but the unconscious artist—well, who is the unconscious artist? When did he live? The answer, no doubt, lies back in that fascinating realm of all literary origins which our ballad critics have for some time been entertainingly discussing. Until they arrive at an agreement the rest of us, I suppose, have a right to remain silent.

Fortunately, in this study the question is not one of consciousness or unconsciousness on the part of the artist, but rather is it a question of consciousness of what? We know that the Elizabethans deliberately set out to write plays. The inquiry now is—How did they start? What did they take for a fixed point of structure? We recall that the middle ages made a rough distinction between tragedy and comedy; and that Chaucer summed up that view in a very strict definition, wherein the chief requirement of a tragedy is that it should end in wretchedness and that the character

should fall from a high estate. This distinction referred to narrative, and not to dramatic treatment; but our early playwrights adopted the distinction. If they chose to have their tragical histories "mixed full of mirth," they announced the fact ("Cambises"); and if they chose to change the ending of a serious story, they warned the public ("Damon and Pythias"). We find their title-pages displaying the words tragedy and comedy. That these were sometimes combined into "tragical-comedy" only goes to prove that the playwright felt the division that his public usually expected.

Now, the prime Elizabethan tragical situation was death. This fact is evinced no more surely by the plays themselves than by the announcements of them. We find such outlines as this: "The Spanish Tragedie, containing the lamentable end of Don Horatio and Bellimperia: with the pittifull death of olde Hieronimo." "The Lamentable Tragedie mixed full of plesant mirth, containing the Life of Cambises, King of Percia, from the beginning of his kingdom until his Death, his one good deed of execution, after that, many wicked deeds and tyrannous murders committed by and through him, and last of all his odious death by God's Justice appointed, Done in such order as followeth."

There is no such thing as an Elizabethan tragedy without death, and those plays that were called tragedies had death at the end. Moreover, not merely death, but violent death was expected. In the miracle plays audiences had become accustomed to slaughter, murder, torture, hanging, and suicide; hence these presentations would easily have been included in Elizabethan tragedies without any influence from abroad. But the influence came, enhancing the native tendency. Yet

it is noticeable that the foreign influence did not furnish the tradition of having death invariably present at the end of the action. The Greek did not, certainly; and the Latin model at first so closely followed in England did not display it as indispensable. The English seem of themselves to have demanded the invariable death conclusion. Whether the early use came from a native impulse toward completeness (as the contribution of the cycle idea to the mystery plays would seem to indicate), or whether the later convention came by mere repetition of earlier chance, one would not be safe in asserting. It may be that what is easily the strongest scene of the church drama made here an enduring record for itself in the dramatic preference of the English people. The emotions excited by the representation of the crucifixion were ultimately pleasurable emotions and not far from what Aristotle asserts as necessary concomitants of great tragedy. Mingled with pity and fear was a sense of propitiation. The sight of suffering thus became purifying in so far as the figure on the cross represented humanity paying a debt for transgression. Moreover, this strongest incident of all the miracle plays occurred as the end of a pageant, and naturally enough (but curiously apposite to our suggestion) finished with the decent arrangement of the body and the carrying of it off the stage with the accompanying word of a friend.

But whatever the cause, the fact remains that the death catastrophe appears to be the first fixed point of structure towards which the Elizabethan playwrights worked in the making of their tragedies. There seems to have been an indissoluble connection in their minds between tragedy and

death, if not between death and tragedy. In other words, their early compositions of the type end in death, and those plays with the word tragedy added to the title in conjunction with some other designation use the word tragedy to signify the element of death. For instance, "The Love of David and Faire Bethsabe, with the Tragedy of Absalom." "The troublesome raigne and lamentable death of Edward the Second, King of England: with the tragical fall of proud Mortimer. [And in the second quarto this addition:] And also the life and death of Peirs Gaveston, the greate Earle of Cornewall, and mighty favorite of King Edward the Second." It is noteworthy that these separate items in this last title indicate not only the parts into which this drama divides, but also the end of each part, and that it is the very close of the play which presents "the *tragical* fall of proud Mortimer"—namely, his loss of his head, for there is no other "fall" presented.

The reason for the addition of this catastrophe to the long tragic death of Edward is really also the popularity of the revenge motive, the subject taken up in our next chapter; the significant fact here is that the words "tragical fall" represent just eighty lines at the *close* of the play. Before taking up the next point of study, however, we might well look at the variation the early dramatists made in their prime tragic situation. In this brief review we will not concern ourselves with sources, but only with the modifications of the chosen scene.

In "Gorboduc" a series of deaths is reported, one consequent upon the other. The younger brother kills the elder; the mother, the younger; the populace, the royal father and

mother; the nobles destroy the leaders of the rabble; and civil war blots out the whole nobility. Since the gentlemen of the Inner Temple who wrote the play were strongly under classical influence, none of these deaths occur on the stage; but that the authors set out to write with the end of their play in mind is proved by the fact that they declared their intention to be to teach a lesson against civil discord.

In the little "tragical comedy" of "Apius and Virginia" there is the reported stabbing of the daughter by her father to save their honor, and the actual bringing in of her severed head.

In Gascoigne's "Jocasta" relatives weep over a dead body pushed about on the stage.

In "Cambises" the hated tyrant, who has killed a number of persons, including an innocent child, and who, toward the end of the play, has met with an accident while leaping on his horse, finally comes before the audience to die, with a "sword thrust up into his side bleeding." He falls down and "quakes and stirs."

In "Tancred and Gismunda" the heroine is forced to drink from a golden goblet her lover's heart with some poison which she has added; and her old father, after fondling the corpse of his daughter, whose sorrow he has caused, "pluckes out his eyes and stabbs himself."

At the close of "The Misfortunes of Arthur," the report is brought in that the king and his traitor son have each given the other a death-wound in personal encounter on the battlefield. The son, it is said, spitted himself on the outstretched sword of his father in order to deliver the blow. The dying king appears on the stage and orders the dead

body of his son to be brought to him. While he gazes on the beloved face, he laments the terrible sin that could bring this end about. The gazing on a face and philosophizing the while affords English drama two or three of its most memorable scenes.

The next variation in the death theme at the end of the play is startling indeed. In "The Spanish Tragedy" we find murder elaborately prepared with the intent of revenge; a quick series of assassinations (one by a woman who thereupon commits suicide); the displaying of a corpse previously hung up for the purpose behind a curtain; the biting out of his own tongue by the hero to avoid possible disclosure of his accomplices; and, finally, his stabbing of himself and his remaining enemy. Hardly could presented catastrophe go further. An obvious modification of the scene just mentioned would be the hanging up of a live person by accident and the stabbing of him to death before the audience. This modification we find in the Absalom tragedy included in the "David and Bethsabe."

Yet another handling of corpses occurs in "The Battle of Alcazar," where the dead leader, propped up in his chair as if alive, is carried about to deceive his followers; and a drowned person is brought dripping upon the stage.

There remains, it would seem, but one possible addition to the list of catastrophe devices before 1590; namely, that the dead should kill the living. We have this addition in the "Solyman and Perseda" last act, where the lustful tyrant meets his death by kissing the poisoned lips of the brave woman he has pursued to her doom.

We see, then, that this favorite situation grew in elab-

orateness at the end of the play until it came to take in not only the report but the presentation of a very large variety of horrors. Catastrophes subsequent to those we have reviewed could for the most part only rearrange these digits, or multiply them together, or subtract from them. Indeed, the first tragedy of the new period ("Tamburlaine") reverted to natural dying for its conclusion. We might say, therefore, that pre-Marlowean dramatists practically threw their net around all catastrophe.

The horror of the last scene of "Titus Andronicus" is only the death of Virginia, the unpleasant suicide of Gismunda, and the successive assassinations of old Hieronimo's play added together. The base indignity in the "Edward II" catastrophe is but an episode of the Damon-and-Pithias "tragic comedy" turned serious. We examine "Macbeth" and we find that at the close the audience witnessed a personal combat and saw a severed head brought in. We recall that in the last act of "Hamlet," besides the duel and the stabbing, there is the drinking of the stoup of wine into which the pearl and the poison have been dropped; and that in "Lear," in addition to the hearing of the deaths of many contestants, we see the grief-stricken parent distractedly mourning over the body of his child. But these details were not new when Shakespeare used them. They had been on the English stage for thirty years. In one of Tourneur's terrible tragedies there occurs the accidental death of a tyrant and in the other a dead body is propped up as if alive; in Massinger's "Duke of Milan" the murderer takes the fatal kiss from the poisoned lips—repeated incidents. In other words, the ending of the early Elizabethan tragedies became

an established convention used both by the scholars and the popular playwrights.

But whoever reads, even slightly, in Elizabethan drama realizes great differences in these similar catastrophes, especially in the case of Shakespeare's plays, and one naturally inquires the cause. Why is it that Shakespeare stands out so great among his great and similar contemporaries? In what way does he surpass those who immediately went before him and those who came after him? It seems no answer to reply, Because he kept the middle way between the drama of the schools and the drama of the people. Yet this statement comes very near to being the truth. He tempered convention with liberality and liberality with convention. He reached a developed typical technic and avoided the overelaboration of it. His predecessors lacked the full development, and his successors went beyond it; that is, to use the biological analogy, the later men reverted.

Yet this is the same old answer that everybody gives, and it is illuminative only if we already know the facts. It errs on the side of summary and generality. One may well ask, What was the typical? And how did Shakespeare perfect it?

It is our plan to answer these questions specifically and in detail for tragedy in terms of the plays themselves. We have made the first advance when we have found a common element; namely, the similarity of the catastrophe. But before we attempt to proceed we ought to find out how it happened that catastrophes not only were but remained so much alike. What bound Elizabethan tragedies together? What was it that reinforced the native impulse?

Chapter III

The Motive, or Impelling Idea

One thing that bound all Elizabethan tragedies together
from "Gorboduc" to "The Traitor" and "The Cardinal" was
the influence of Seneca. To Elizabethans "Seneca" meant
a number of plays, the ten Latin tragedies ascribed to one
name. These were studied in the schools, paraphrased as
class exercises and imitated and quoted by everybody who
made any pretense to learning either in Latin or the vernacu-
lar. Queen Elizabeth herself translated part of the "Her-
cules Œtaeus." In 1581 a collected authorized edition of
the ten plays came out in English rhymed verse, and was
extraordinarily popular.

How acute the influence of Seneca was on Elizabethan
tragedy in the minutiae of rhetoric and philosophy, Pro-
fessor Cunliffe set forth about twenty years ago in a doc-
torate essay at the University of London.[1] But the influence
that Professor Cunliffe discovers was, it seems to me, a
perennial influence, one applied to the minds of the rising
generations successively, much as Greek and Latin tradition
is brought to bear on the minds of high school and university
students today, and then ultimately in weaker form reaches
the man of the street. Contact with Seneca was obviously
in many cases not immediate, but rather three or four times
removed, like the contact of some persons with Alexander

[1] "Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy," John W. Cun-
liffe. Macmillan, 1893.

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Pope today, solely through household quotations. Moreover, such influence of phrase and sentiment varied with the person influenced and resulted in mere quotation or in free and characteristic assimilation, according to the amount of individuality and creative genius possessed. Shakespeare made use of Seneca to perfect his own technic.

It is not the minutiae of Senecan influence that we need to recall in this study, but rather the large structural effects that Professor Cunliffe altogether omits. He speaks of the five acts and the chorus, the violation of the unities and of the so-called stage decencies, the messenger, and the other stock characters; but it is not these with which we are most concerned. The chorus was soon largely neglected even by the scholars, and the five acts had been in use in English comedy for fifteen years when "Gorboduc" was written. The Chorus was used by Ben Jonson in one of his two tragedies, and Shakespeare employed it much modified in "Romeo and Juliet," and harnessed to his needs in "Henry V," and as somewhat of a convenience in "Pericles" and "Winter's Tale"; but we do not today consider it as anything essential, nor was it so considered in England after 1587. It is to be found in "Gorboduc," in "Tancred and Gismunda," in "The Misfortunes of Arthur"; but in "The Spanish Tragedy" it appears as already changed in nature, and Marlowe got along without it, except in one play.

We will not consider the mere mechanical division into acts and scenes. The school dramas of Senecan imitation observed the division made by the Chorus; but many of the best Elizabethan plays were practically continuous, uninterrupted presentations, or at least the manuscripts look to us

now as if such were the case. So far as the quartos indicate, "Hamlet" was not divided by Shakespeare beyond Act 1, Scene 2 (and the indication there is only a little more space) ; "Antony and Cleopatra," not beyond Act 1, Scene 1 ; that is, the author did not definitely mark the larger divisions that the modern texts employ. All he indicated were exits and entrances. Division is convenient for the student and critic, but not at all essential to the structure of the play. Indeed, the matter is almost wholly a problem of presentation. Everyone knows that modern actors' copies bear other divisions for Shakespeare's plays than the conventional ones publishers use. For instance, Marlowe and Sothern present "Macbeth" in six acts, and "Romeo and Juliet" likewise. Ben Jonson did not divide "Sejanus" into scenes or mark any of the exits and entrances, although he revised the manuscript for the folio edition of 1616. "Catiline" was separated into parts only by the choruses. This confidence in the players and the recognition of possible varying conditions in buildings and stages show the practical good sense of Elizabethan dramatists, who were for the most part also actors. There was a great difference between the court stage, with its luxuriance of costume and scenery, for which Jonson wrote his elaborate masques, and the platforms of the strolling players, or the limited facilities of the "private" theaters. Neither our dramatists nor our actors in Elizabethan days were concerned much, except in the masques, about mechanical inventions or illusions. Writers frankly appealed to the imagination of the audience and were concerned primarily with presenting in beautiful verse intense passions of interesting men and

women living anywhere on the globe at any period of time. Jonson was concerned with something else, too, historical accuracy of character and quotation; but he was not concerned in his tragedies, as writers were later in the Restoration, about the shape of the walls on the stage or the pattern of the floor mat, or just when one chair should be exchanged for another. Jonson was much stricter in small details than many of his fellows, but he had a large enough vision of true drama to know essentials from non-essentials. The division into acts, therefore, as well as the chorus and the so-called stage decencies, may be considered as non-essential —at least for this study. We are interested in what has persisted as indispensable elements of structure, and shall move forward, considering in detail only those larger points.

The Senecan convention that undoubtedly made the deepest impression on Elizabethan minds was the revenge motive. It is not surprising to discover, therefore, that it had a direct and lasting effect on the structure of tragedy. There were three marked periods of influence. First, the direct, through the plays themselves either in the original or in translation. Second, the return through the revolt against it, when Marlowe and Shakespeare sought other themes and a freer technic, yet gradually, nevertheless, conformed somewhat to the best conventions of Seneca and partly remade them. This fact is especially manifest in "Romeo and Juliet," in the Senecan elements of "Hamlet," and in the structure of "Othello." Third, Senecan influence was indirect, applied through the later fashions popular in English tragedy from 1611 to 1642. The last phase we shall omit. Our study ends with 1611.

Before we can appreciate the facts of Senecan influence we shall need to examine Senecan plays themselves and analyze one or two somewhat completely. The process may seem a little long, but we can hardly dispense with the knowledge. It is necessary for reference and for the understanding of technical terms. We need notice, however, only those matters that concern essential structure.

Nine of the ten[1] tragedies of Seneca have revenge for a motive of the catastrophe: revenge of a deity for the murder of a favorite ("Hercules Furens," Juno for Lycus; "Œdipus," Apollo for Laius); revenge of brother on brother for usurping wife and kingdom ("Thyestes"); father for the supposed immorality of his son ("Hippolytus"); shades for their own murder ("Troades," "Agamemnon"); wife for desertion ("Medea," "Hercules Œteus"); tyrant for favor of populace toward his divorced Empress ("Octavia").[1]

Just as all the Senecan tragedies have the same general motive for the catastrophe, so all have practically the same form for the presentation of the action.

The Senecan drama opens with a monologue or dialogue of retrospective and anticipatory import. For instance, in the "Thyestes," Tantalus, Mægera, and the Chorus succeed not only in laying the coming tragedy before us, but also in reviewing the history of Tantalus and thus explaining the presence of the atmosphere of crime and revenge. So in the "Hippolytus," so in the "Medea," we get a review and foresight; so in the "Agamemnon," where the shade of Thyestes puts the audience into possession of all the secrets; so in the

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[1] The *Phoenissae* (or *Thebais*) was not completed.

[1] "Octavia" is now known not to have been by the same writer as the other dramas.

"Hercules Furens," where Juno lays bare her mind.   We notice this convention, however, about the Senecan ghost and other supernatural beings: they take no part in the subsequent action as do some of the Elizabethan specters.[1]

The Chorus invariably closes the first act, either by assisting in the narrative or by moralizing on themes drawn from the past or the coming events.

The whole of Act 1, therefore, is in Seneca practically an exposition, epic in character, but serving its purpose—since his drama (as we think now, though the Elizabethans thought otherwise) was intended for perusal and not presentation.   The Elizabethan playwright, with his acute spectacular sense, wholly oblivious of Seneca's classical conventions of unity of time, began his play at a point as many days or years before the catastrophe as he pleased.   Hence the presentation of action in the early Elizabethan tragedies begins much further from the catastrophe than does the presentation of action in the Senecan.   In fact, it has been said that the Senecan tragedy begins just after what in the story we should call the crisis; and the whole drama is little more than the elaboration of the catastrophe, or rather of the return of a deed on the doer—the retribution that ends in the catastrophe.   That this statement is not wholly true and is slightly misleading, we shall see later in connection with the "Hippolytus."   For the present it is enough to say that the first act is in part retrospective and expository of the

[1] The "Octavia" is a slight exception, since Agrippina appears in act three.   She does not, however, affect the action.   In the Elizabethan play of "Locrine," Albanact's Ghost snatches food from the hand of the starving Humber.

story that has already passed its crisis, and anticipatory of the catastrophe that is consequent.

Act 2 in Seneca is in every case dialogue that sets the chief agent of the catastrophe forth in the act of planning the execution of his revenge ("Thyestes," a dialogue between Atreus and the guard; "Medea," Medea and nurse; "Agamemnon," Clytemnestra and nurse, and so on). Since the deed for which this revenge is planned has preceded the time of the drama, the reader's attention from the first is directed to the catastrophe, which is to be final. For instance, Thyestes has already committed the offense that brings his brother's retributive action; so have Jason and Creon, that which brings Medea's. The execution of the revenge is therefore a fixed point. This emphasis of the catastrophe the Elizabethans did not overlook, and we find them in every instance sedulously caring for its effect.

In Act 3 of the Senecan plays we have the antagonists face to face and almost on equal terms. For instance, Thyestes is a free agent and need not accept the crown, though his brother counts on his cupidity;[1] Creon is king and need not give Medea a night in which to devise a scheme, or Jason may speak up like a man and thus save his soul and his children; Phaedra has everything in her own hands, for Theseus believes her, yet Theseus need not be so gullible as he is about the sword. The condition within the drama at the third act is generally this: Dominance does not change

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[1] The dialogue with Creon comes just before the opening of Act 3 in the "Medea," and the dialogue with Jason within Act 3. The two, together with the soliloquy between, form an interesting group, prototypes of a Shakespearean convention that we will take up later.

sides—the ascendant force simply becomes stronger; the one that flared up in opposition sinks and is lost. We can hope for only an instant that Jason will be convinced by Medea, or that Thyestes will refuse the crown, or that Œdipus will in the end prove himself innocent as well as ignorant.

Act 4 in Seneca is sometimes, as in Shakespeare, the repository of incidents: the meeting of Œdipus and the old man; the prophesying of Cassandra; Poppaea's dream; hence it is the place used by the author for introduction of new characters. Or it contains the partial fulfillment of the catastrophe: the death of Hippolytus; the slaughter of Thyestes's sons; the death of Dejanira; Medea's preparation and dispatch of the fatal cloak.

Act 5 is given over to the completion of the catastrophe, either in further deeds visibly presented,—the suicide of Phaedra, the assassination of her sons by Medea, the stabbing of Cassandra by Clytemnestra, the seizing of Octavia— or in the recital of them by the Chorus; as in "Œdipus," "Troades," "Hercules Œtaeus."

After we have looked at the action of the "Medea" and the "Hippolytus" and have summed up the revenge motive we will notice its course in early English tragedy before Shakespeare.

"Medea"

Act One. The tragedy opens with a monologue by Medea, in which she prays the gods above and below to visit vengeance on Jason, on the new spouse, on Creon, and all the Corinthian race. She reviews her own and Jason's history up to his present alliance and begins to discover that it is to be her privilege to punish the offenders. "But how?" she

asks herself, just as the chorus chants forth the nuptial song of Jason and Creusa, and ends the act.

Act Two. Medea is enraged at the music, and in her angry raving strikes the keynote of the subsequent action:

> "Si potest, vivat meus,
> Ut fuit, Jason; sin minus, vivat tamen,
> Memorque nostri muneri parcat meo."

But because of her love for Jason, she immediately begins to debate with herself whether, after all, Creon is not to blame for the whole unhappy disturbance, and, asserting that he is, she declares her intention of reducing his palace to cinders.

In the ensuing argument with the Nurse, Medea comes to the realization that, though she may have impulse and boldness, she yet lacks one requisite for a satisfying revenge; namely, time in which to mature a plan. She is to be ordered into exile, she knows, but she tells the nurse that she will not go until she has had her revenge. She comforts them both with faith in her ability to secure the delay; "for," argues she, "fortune may rob us of our riches, but not of our mental attributes"—when pat upon her words enters Creon, *timidus imperio*. By taunts and seeming submission she outwits him into granting her a day in which to prepare for her departure; and then in very wantonness of conscious power she offers to let him shorten the time. She says: *"nimis est: recidas aliquid ex isto licet."*

For Creon, this meeting is the test. He knows that he should not grant the petition. He even says to Medea: *Fraudibus tempus petis.* But, although, when she queries, *"Quae fraus timeri tempore exiguo potest?"* he answers:

"Nullum ad nocendum tempus angustum est malis." Yet he yields, and Medea is victor.

The rise to this high point has been made through one stage—the gaining of Creon's consent. This consent comes at the end of the act, and makes a scene of much interest, one of an intense group.

Act Three. The situation parallel with this, but surpassing it in interest, is the second scene of the third act. Here Medea faces Jason and dramatically recalls earlier conditions, emphasizes his desertion, pleads for his loyalty, and, upon being repulsed, renounces her children and pretends submission. During the interview she has found his vulnerable spot—*natos amat*—and she knows where to strike when she is ready. She pretends submission only to conceal her real purpose of revenge, in which she has finally been settled by Jason's hardness, and for which she now "bends up each corporal agent." After he leaves her with the smug suggestion, *"miserias lenit quies,"* she vehemently rages over his heartlessness and rushes to prepare her revenge, of which she outlines the first part, and thus gives again a clear insight into the catastrophe. In its intensity, in its recapitulation of earlier conditions, in its repetition in form and partly in content of a preceding scene, in its unmistakable turn toward the catastrophe,—in so much this scene is surely an archetype of one of the great functional scenes in typical Elizabethan drama. We shall come across it often.

Act Four. Act 4 in the "Medea" is taken up with a recital of the preparations for the revenge stroke, and con-

tains the incident of the sending of the sons with the fatal cloak.

Act Five.   Act 5 contains the catastrophe, which is partly recited by messenger, partly performed; the more thrilling deed, the assassination of the children, is apparently accomplished before the eyes of the spectator.   This convention of part recitation and part presentation the Elizabethans adopted; though, influenced by popular taste, they leaned more to presentation.

Hippolytus

Act One.   The "Hippolytus," like the "Medea," opens with a monologue; but, unlike that of the "Medea," the monologue is not retrospective or epic, but spectacular.   Its function is simply to introduce Hippolytus as a hunter. Scene 2, however, brings Phaedra forth, as the chief actor, in a dialogue with the nurse, wherein they reveal Phaedra's state of mind about her absent husband and about her present love.

Act Two.   Act 2, Scene 1, accordingly, goes on with the revelation, offers the moral debate, and ends (as usual) with the protagonist's decision to carry out the first impulse; but not, however, until after Phaedra has tentatively given up her desire and has threatened to commit suicide as the easiest way out of the difficulty.   The threat gives opportunity for the conventional discussion of the right "to be or not to be" (Phaedra, Dejanira, Hamlet, Brutus), and serves the dramatic purpose of setting the nurse in motion.   She promises to solicit the young man in behalf of her mistress.

Scene 2 presents the nurse in a vain attempt to induce in Hippolytus a conjugal frame of mind; and Scene 3 brings him to his crisis, when he realizes what it is Phaedra wants. When he rejects her, he signs not only her doom but his. She must meet Theseus.

Act Three. Up to this meeting Phaedra has been the leader. After the meeting Theseus seemingly controls the action. For a change is made by Phaedra's lie. This scene over the ivory-handled dagger starts the return of the evil deed upon the doer. Theseus goes out to punish the supposed offender, and, in having him killed, most effectively punishes the real culprit. Phaedra loves Hippolytus more than she loves her life; and when she sees his dead body she reveals her secret, defends him, and then kills herself. In a certain sense, however, Phaedra leads throughout. It is the calamitous result of her passion that is set forth. So with the original Greek. In the "Hippolytus" of Euripides, Phaedra's passion is the great feature of the action, and after the crisis she directs the course of events with her dead hand.

Acts Four and Five. The catastrophe, as is evident, begins back with the report of the death of Hippolytus (Act IV) and ends with the suicide of Phaedra (Act V).

The tragedy is wholly romantic in theme and in some particulars of form. It proved to be the antecedent of a long line of love tragedies from "Tancred and Gismunda" to the present day. The young men who wrote "Tancred and Gismunda" knew Seneca at first hand, but they need not necessarily have so known him in order to get suggestions from him. This play of "Hippolytus" was translated

into English by John Studley as early as 1556. "Tancred
and Gismunda," or, in its earlier form, "Gismunde of
Salerno," was presented twelve years later.

A good convention that the Elizabethans took from Seneca
was the revenge motive. This statement may seem a little
startling in the light of the many assertions as to the baleful
influence of the Latin plays. But I speak advisedly. The
Senecan revenge motive brought order out of chaos in Eng-
lish serious drama, and this was no small contribution.
Without it, or something similar to it, we should still be
having backboneless plays like "Cambises," "Promos and
Cassandra," and "Damon and Pithias." In the following
review of some of the extant early plays up to 1587, we
shall see how the Elizabethans gradually came to under-
stand the advantage of a dramatic motive clearly empha-
sized.

Cambises. "Cambises" is one of the simplest of the
tragedies and not very much affected by Seneca, as the kind
and number of the personages and as the course of the inci-
dents show. Though the author quotes Seneca, the action
is not Senecan. The formula runs thus: A kills B, A kills
C, A kills D, A kills E, A is killed by accident.

Interspersed among these events are comic scenes. There
is a change of motive for each of the tyrant's deeds and no
reason for his death. The comic scenes are innocent of any
connection with the main course of events—if there can be
said to be a main course. That is what is lacking, a course
of events, and that is what a revenge motive would have
given this play; that is what a revenge motive gives to our
more decided Senecan imitations. Things just "happen" in

"Cambises"; they do not "occur." What I mean is, they do
not run one upon another for a reason. Now, in "Gorboduc,"
a Senecan imitation, they do so run. The deaths are conse-
quential and revenge is declared each time to be the motive.[1]
"Gorboduc," so far as structure goes, is therefore a vastly
better play than "Cambises"; but the situations are never-
theless epic, not dramatic. "Gorboduc," I feel, would have
to yield to "Cambises" on the popular stage today; for there
is not a little good, lively dramatic business in both the comic
and the tragic parts of "Cambises." The English, we re-
member, had come in their long association with church
drama to enjoy good situations and stirring incidents. The
scene where the tyrant sets the little boy up as a mark and
shoots him through the heart won the breathless attention
of the Elizabethan audience, I dare say, and was as thor-
oughly liked as a similar scene later with the Germans.

The mother-motive of the miracle play is well emphasized
here in "Cambises," and despite the early date of the piece
is not ill presented. The child makes an endearing speech
just as the king is going to kill him:

> "Good master king, doo not shoot at me, my
> mother loves me best of all."

And the mother as she gathers the dead, though still warm,
little body in her arms and wraps it about with her apron,
utters this musical line:

> "Thy mother yet wil kisse thy lips, silk-soft and
> pleasant white."

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[1] Act III, Scene 1, ll. 163-167; Act IV, Scene 1, ll. 34-81;
Scene 2, ll. 25, 136, 247. Act V, Scene 1, ll. 19, 44, 53, 120.

The next to the last word is not altogether appropriate, but the line as a whole is exceedingly beautiful, and certainly it is a marvel among its lumbering seven-footed kind.

We might notice the variety of motives that Cambises indulges in. He executes the wicked judge for unjust decisions (this is the tyrant's one good deed); he kills the child because of a frank speech of its father and to show that wine does not unsteady a king's hand and that even in his cups he "could doo this valiant thing"; he has his brother put to death on the testimony of a liar; and he delivers his wife into the hands of Cruelty and Murder (abstract characters) because she wept openly in public for the death of his brother. The setting of this last scene, a banquet, was a favorite device with all drama, and very effective with tragedy from the miracle play of the last supper to Schiller's excellent use of the circling question in "The Piccolomini."

But the remarkable fact about "Cambises" is that, despite its allusion to Seneca in the prologue, it misses the one valuable thing which Seneca could have given it; namely, a continued motive. That the play was popular in its own day is attested by the parodies of the Cambises vein. The reason of the appeal lay in the stirring situations. There was torture (*flea him with a false skin*), and blood ran on the stage (*A little bladder of vinegar prickt*). Interesting to note, also Yonge Child's heart was cut out before the audience.

Gorboduc. There is a slight feeling of totality aroused by the "Gorboduc" action, but simply because everybody is killed off. The deaths are reported, not enacted. There is

no idea of unity of time. Whatever unity of action there is comes from the sequence of revenge motives.

Tancred and Gismunda. In "Tancred and Gismunda," as in "Gorboduc," there is a revenge motive; but "Tancred and Gismunda" is better constructed than "Gorboduc," because the motive is single and strong. There is but one catastrophe, and it is definitely prepared for. The agent of it kneeling and holding up his hands to heaven makes public declaration of his intention. Confessedly Senecan, the play recalls the "Hippolytus" in structure and the "Thyestes" and "Œdipus" in two incidents. In the version we now have of "Tancred and Gismunda" we find the argument, the chorus, the five acts, and the (Elizabethan) convention of the dumb show.

The plot divides itself into two parts, marked off by Tancred's discovery, which is made subsequent to the close of Act 3 and is reported in Act 4, Scene 1. After this scene, dominance changes sides. Tancred, who has before been but a comparatively week antagonist, takes up the action, reverses success, and carries the love story to a shocking catastrophe. Up to Tancred's report the action has been the triumphing of Gismunda's love over her father's opposition; after his report the action is the triumphing of Tancred's opposition over Gismunda's love. The exposition is accomplished, as in the "Hippolytus," by means of a monologue succeeded by a dialogue, in which the young woman sets forth her loneliness as a quondam wife, and speaks of the possibility of a new love. Though there is a slight difference between the first acts in the two dramas (Phaedra talks to the nurse; Gismunda to her father), the outlines of the

acts are precisely alike, even to the introduction, which is practically spectacular in both, and the chorus, which closes both.

The second acts in the two dramas are also the same in outline: three scenes and a chorus each. Scene 1 is a dialogue, in both dramas, between the young woman and her aged confidant, who promises to try to soften the opponent and induce him to live—in the one case, the father; in the other, the young man himself. Scene 2 is the attempt—a dialogue between the confidant and the man, which ends in failure. Scene 3 is in the one drama a dialogue; in the other practically a dialogue (except for a final speech by an otherwise silent spectator). The romantic character of the Italian *novella,* the source of this fable, carried the English dramatists away from the Senecan form, but not so far, it seems, as some critics have thought. We might notice, before proceeding, that the third act in each drama consists of three scenes and a chorus; that the discovery of guilty love is punished by the discoverer with death to the young man; that his murder is accomplished by agents and is reported; and that the report causes the suicide of the young woman, a suicide that in each drama takes place before the audience.

In the English drama the rise to the test scene proceeds through two stages: (1) the attempt on the part of Lucrece, the confidant, to gain the father's consent; (2) the independent action of Gismunda to favor her lover. The rise in the Latin drama is made through practically the same two stages: (1) the attempt on the part of the nurse to gain the consent of Hippolytus; (2) the independent action of Phaedra to win him.

It is noticeable also that each man is preparing for a hunt when accosted by the confidant of the young woman, and each asks: "What of her? Is she not well?" And also each confidant advises her mistress to desist for fear of consequences; but promises to help because she loves her, and at some time in the action reports to the audience the state of the young woman's mind.

The test scenes differ because of the story: one is wholly enacted and partly reported (falsely, by a participator) to the avenger, whose realization of the crime marks the turning point of the action; the other is wholly reported, but is emphasized by the witness when he kneels and vows vengeance, and in his oath outlines the coming catastrophe.

From the beginning of Act 4 the English dramatists have a hard struggle to keep to the Senecan form. They seem constantly on the point of having the assassination of the young man take place directly on the stage, though they finally succeed in getting it enacted behind the scenes, but not until they have allowed Tancred to call Gismunda forth and tell her that he is going to kill her lover, and to call the lover forth and tell him he is doomed. The fourth act in the English drama is consequently much longer than in the Latin, but is conventional in containing a retrospective narrative of what has occurred between the acts. The report is part of the catastrophe.

The fifth act, therefore, opens in the English drama with the conventional messenger's report to the chorus of the continuance of the catastrophe-deeds. In Scene 2 of this act we have a recollection of "Thyestes" in the present to Gismunda of her lover's heart, which, after a bit of rather dainty

rhetoric on her part, she drinks off from the golden goblet with some poison she has added. In the closing situation in the drama there is a fine mixture of popular and classical tradition: after a melodramatic farewell death-scene between father and daughter, the old man plucks out his eyes before the audience, apparently, and then, not content without another popular convention, commits suicide, in order to wind up the whole bad business.

These last two occurrences were added to the catastrophe twenty-three years after the play was first presented. In the early version Gismunda died quietly and the old man simply wept. The addition shows the trend of Elizabethan tragedy.

It is obvious that this play moves along with some degree of impressiveness, not wholly because of the sensational and unpleasant story, but also because of the preparation of the audience for the catastrophe, because of a knowledge of the motives of the actors. That the father and girl are at variance we are aware from the first, how she outwits him we observe in the hollow cane scene where the lover gets the letter, and that the father will kill the young man we know from definite avowal; but the spectator's excitement arises from watching the rest of the catastrophe discover itself. The gift comes as a surprise, the girl's response to it as a distinct shock, and the father's ending of himself as a superfluity of poetic justice. It is truly an Elizabethan touch to kill the father in the same play. According to the Greeks, and even according to Seneca, Tancred's death should have been another drama. However, the point we mark here is that this play is comparatively simple and straightforward,

and what kept it so against the many possibilities of inci-
dent was obviously the Senecan revenge motive that formed
the construction line of the action and held the love theme
down. In some of the later plays the love theme runs away
with the revenge, and consequently with the tragic effect
("Merchant of Venice") ; and in some, incident runs away
with both love and revenge to the undoing of the general
structure ("The White Devil").

But there is one great fault in "Tancred and Gismunda"
which renders it unsatisfactory even as a Senecan imitation.
The revenge is not in kind. For a full grown woman to
refuse to obey her father's whim concerning a second mar-
riage scarcely justifies his murder of her, of her lover, and
of himself. The opportunity to make his caprice a strong
enough motive was lost by the playwright through lack of
characterization of the domineering old man. He should
have been brought out as more of a Lear and a Coriolanus
combined, or he should have been represented as having in
opposition another suitor for his daughter, as old Capulet
had for his, and thus so to have had his honor compromised
by his daughter's disobedience as to be rendered desperate.
To have asked the playwright to see this lack in 1568 would
have been, of course, to ask him to anticipate the development
of English tragedy. When "Tancred and Gismunda" was
revised in 1591, "Romeo and Juliet" had not been put by
Shakespeare into the form of a drama, and none of the
"Hamlet" versions as we know them today were finished.
But the elements that went to the making of the final
inimitable "Hamlet" were fast gathering together.

The Spanish Tragedy. The play that fixed the revenge motive in the English theater and brought to every man's consciousness in its own day an idea of Seneca as an inspirer of dramatic composition is "The Spanish Tragedy." It has continued to the present to stand to the general reader as the emblem of Seneca in England. And this position is correct if it signifies the fact that the great popularity of "The Spanish Tragedy" emphasized for both audience and playwrights the most important structural element that the Senecan drama could give to the English; namely, a clear dramatic motive. The other English plays under Senecan influence had had revenge for an avowed motive, but they had only slightly and passingly treated it. "Gorboduc" rather emphasized the horror of civil war, and "Tancred and Gismunda" presented an old man taking vengeance because he had been disobeyed in an action wherein the prime interest was the love story.

English plays before "The Spanish Tragedy" had not had revenge in kind; and therefore the purpose of the killing and consequently the construction-line of the drama had not been emphasized duly. "The Spanish Tragedy" presented revenge in kind, and there could be no mistake about the fact. The play drew its popularity therefrom. The spectators not only might witness a catastrophe of the sort they liked, but they might watch it coming, long for it, enjoy it in anticipation, and justify it afterwards—all without explanations. The situation demanded it; the play was built on it. Then, too, they knew who was going to bring about this catastrophe. Every word he uttered was for them important. They were

to be, as it were, accessories before the fact. Because they sympathized with him and desired the assassination, they shared in the action of the play.

"The Spanish Tragedy" was deservedly popular. It held the stage for fifty years and became the progenitor of one of the most brilliant types of English tragedy and of one of the greatest dramas of all the world and of all time. The early play was popular abroad as at home. The English comedians took it to the Continent, and we hear of various performances in Germany. Whatever one may say about the accumulated horrors, however much its contemporaries might laugh at its bad Seneca and poor Latin and little Spanish (its *pocas palabras!*), it had a reason for being. That the author did not himself know at first what he was doing is clearly evident. It took him some time to reach his own play, his own distinct contribution. He wrote two-fifths of comparatively worthless stuff before he got down to the real action. Andrea, the ghost, recognizes the slow progress, and at the end of Act I queries disconsolately, "Come we for *this* from depths of underground?"

Kyd, or whoever it was who wrote the play, started out to make a Senecan imitation. He had the "Hercules Furens" in mind and possibly the whole English Seneca in hand. "Hercules Furens" had been in English translation for about fifteen years and the black letter edition of all the "Ten Tragedies" had been circulating for five or six years before "The Spanish Tragedy" was written. I have nowhere else seen a statement to the effect that the author of "The Spanish Tragedy" probably had the "Hercules Furens" in mind; but, to feel pretty certain that he had, one has only to

compare Andrea's report with the report of Theseus about the nether world through which he and Hercules have just come.[1]

There are the same general sights, situations, habits, customs and proper names in Andrea's report as are in that of Theseus and in the choruses that precede and follow it. For Andrea's disquisitions before and after the play, Kyd hardly needed to know other classical allusions than those found in the "Hercules Furens," except the names of Hector and Achilles and the items of the gates of horn. The last he got, doubtless, from the sixth book of the "Æneid," unless it were already a common literary term. From the "Hercules Furens" the English author could also have taken the suggestion for the madness theme, a momentous borrowing that was to play an almost universal part in later revenge drama.

"The Spanish Tragedy," however, is in many respects remarkably un-Senecan. For one thing, the acts are four in number instead of five, and the chorus that closes each act is in the form of a dialogue—though the fact that the

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[1] The statement has been made that the Induction of "The Spanish Tragedy" (see J. Schick, Note 1 to the Temple Classics edition, Sp. Tr., p. 135) was very certainly conceived in imitation of Seneca's "Thyestes." I think this statement would be hard to prove if much more is meant by it than that Kyd had in mind the presenting of two figures from the nether world, one of whom called for revenge while the other personified it. It is perhaps true, rather, that the author of "The Spanish Tragedy" had the whole English Seneca in mind, and that the so-called "Second Tragedy," the "Thyestes," particularly suggested the frame work of the Induction, while the "First Tragedy," the "Hercules Furens," furnished the larger part of the content; in other words, the descriptions of the nether world correspond to those in the "Hercules Furens," not those in the "Thyestes." Moreover, Kyd need not have gone to the "Thyestes" for the idea of a pair arising from the realms of death, since Hercules and Theseus arise therefrom.

acts are four would not have been considered by Kyd as un-Senecan, since the "Thebais" and the "Octavia" (which were then thought to be Seneca's) have in the black letter edition only four acts. It may be significant in relation to the "Hercules Furens" parallels that "The Spanish Tragedy" chorus is totally cut off from the rest of the play in the sense that there is no interchange of words between it and any of the actors proper. The "Hercules Furens" is the only Senecan tragedy where this total disassociation occurs; in all the others there is some interchange of words between the chorus and the actors proper. Kyd, therefore, wittingly or unwittingly was helping to make new drama by his emphasis.

But newest of all was the material out of which the play was made. It is not, like the Senecan, old and well-known fable, but contemporary, popular, political gossip about the wars of Spain and Portugal. The author seems to have woven together bits of hearsay with his own imagination. So far there is known no other play or novel containing the story;[1] that is, "the story of Horatio's and Belimperia's love; of Horatio's murder by Belimperia's brother, Don Lorenzo, and Horatio's rival, Don Balthazar, Prince of Portugal; and the revenge of Horatio's father, Hieronimo, Marshal of Spain, by means of a play where the murders supposed to be only represented are carried out in reality."

It is with Act II that this story of somewhat closely connected events begins. Before Act II, as we have said, the author tries to start a revenge play in behalf of Andrea the ghost, a former friend of Horatio's, but succeeds only in

[1] J. Schick in the Introduction to "The Spanish Tragedy" in the Temple Classics.

presenting an induction to the Horatio-Belimperia love plot
By its encompassing machinery of the chorus of Ghost and
Revenge and by its first announcement, "The Spanish Trag-
edy" professes to be, in Senecan style, the revenge of a
ghost on its mortal enemy for a narrated reason; but by
the evidence of its own scenes, the play turns out to be, in
truly English style, the revenge of a man on the same
enemy for an allied, acted reason.

There are three fables involved, and naturally the author
gets lost among them. He doubles on his track; hence the
emphasis of the revenge motive and hence the utter shatter-
ing of the unities. The revenge, however, when it finally
comes, is entirely intelligible; for it is in kind—a life for a
life. This fact is the strong structural contribution of "The
Spanish Tragedy."

Even the part of the play that professes to be Senecan
is really something new and different. The author begins
regularly enough in Senecan conventions by having the
Ghost narrate in retrospection his own lugubrious tale; but
not content with this recital and overcome by an inclination
toward the popular, the author tries to present part of this
story in acting scenes, in a home-coming from the battle
mentioned. Naturally, the *dramatis personae* only repeat in
broken discourse practically the same narration as the Ghost
has given.

During these alternating Spanish and Portuguese court
scenes, however, the author has really grasped the idea of
this play, and with Act II sets out to present it. Here what
is to be the Elizabethan English style of structure definitely
begins. The author does not know what to do with a

Senecan ghost, but he knows what to do with men. He will present the murder of Horatio, Hieronimo's son, and then present Hieronimo's revenge for that murder! This plan will afford two favorite scenes causally connected. But the play, therefore, falls into two parts with the close of each part marked by the favorite event—a killing. The first division proceeds swiftly and smoothly and not without some lyric beauty through the love episodes to the murder in the arbor (Act II, Scenes iv-v). But here things halt. The Chorus reveals again the fact that the author realizes that he has not reached the all-important scene—the revenge deed. Accordingly he promises that deed, and by the promise once more emphasizes the construction motive of his drama.

Yet in attempting to carry out the punishment of the murderers the author happens on a fascinating problem—the hesitation motive as counter-force to revenge—and engrossed with this he blunders on from scene to scene, going far beyond the length of the preceding action and really making a new play, the mad Hieronimo's play. That "The Spanish Tragedy" was popularly thought of as Hieronimo's play is attested by the fact that it is often so called.[1]

The early emphasis of this figure by the author and the appreciation of it by the public point to the gradual emergence of the consciousness of another essential element of great tragedy; namely, definite characterization. What could be done with this revenge motive as a structural element and the madness and hesitator motive as character themes is demonstrated by Shakespeare's "Hamlet."

[1] In Henslowe we find "Jeronymo," "Geronymo." In the 1615 edition, "The Spanish Tragedy; or Hieronimo's Mad Again."

As a result of the study in the present chapter we are to remember that we find in early Elizabethan imitations of Seneca one motive strongly emphasized and more and more convincingly worked out as the drama proceeds from 1566 to 1586. Besides this emphasis of motive as a constructive line for a tragedy, there is a wealth of material indicated that very well anticipates the three main divisions of later English serious plays; namely, Italian romantic passion, British historical legend, foreign contemporary politics.

The Misfortunes of Arthur. British historical legend finds it representative among the Senecan imitations in "The Misfortunes of Arthur." Though this play has not much significance for us in the study of the advance of the structure of English tragedy, we might pause a minute to note its relative historical position. Its action is a strife between father and son, and its theme is the incest-revenge motive of Greek tragedy. The play has a wider sweep than either "Tancred and Gismunda" or "The Spanish Tragedy," and it has this sweep because of its Greek suggestions. Indeed, in one scene it presents the great lonely palace situation of Æschylus's "Agamemnon," which it distinctly recalls. In the "Agamemnon," the "Choephorae," and the "Eumenides," it was Æschylus himself who started the very potent revenge motive on its way. Seneca transmits the stories, the names, and somewhat of the characters of Greek drama. The Elizabethans take on the form, the situations, and the construction-motive of the Greek-Senecan tradition, but they find their own material. The best early example of their finding of their own material is this remarkably good play of "The

Misfortunes of Arthur." It is a tragedy that would not need to be despised in any tongue and a tragedy that certainly would not have had so limited an influence in any drama less brilliant and hurried than the Elizabethan. There are some slight echoes in "Macbeth" which we will notice later. But the truth about this very regular and excellent play is that it was already, on the day of its presentation, a thing of the past. In form it was "of the old school." It was out-classed and out-influenced by a robustious fellow of the public boards.

Chapter IV

The Protagonist

The fact that Ben Jonson's additions to "The Spanish Tragedy" in 1601-02 took the form of the expansion of the part of Hieronimo reveals the recognition of the shifting of emphasis that had occurred in the preceding fifteen years or so. The name that stands for this shifting is that of Christopher Marlowe. He was the dramatist who first in English tragedy definitely and almost exclusively emphasized the protagonist, or chief struggler. Tamburlaine, Dr. Faustus, and Barabas are interesting personalities in themselves, regardless of what they specifically do. They are interesting rather for what they want to do. It is the actuating purpose of their lives that attracted Marlowe. Loudly disclaiming dependence on the past, Marlowe yet seized the most effective structural element that the past had evolved, and built his plays on it. He transmuted the abstract wish of a bloodless ghost into a life principle of a militant personality. Tamburlaine is the embodiment of the lust of power, Faustus of knowledge, and Barabas of gold and vengeance.

The unconscious shifting of the dramatic motive from the heart of a ghost to the heart of a man had been made in "The Spanish Tragedy," and had been part cause of a remarkable success. What might not Marlowe expect

from a deliberate embodiment? Hieronimo's seeking for vengeance was not the full hatred of a passionate soul, but Marlowe's protagonists live and breathe only in their desires. Such emphasis easily results in caricature, as it resulted in Marlowe's own Merchant Jew. Yet the emphasis served our drama well. After Marlowe, no tragic character dared be purposeless. By this statement I do not mean that Marlowe understood or practiced a full motivation of character. Such exquisite work was left for our greatest dramatist; but Marlowe did understand and practice the motivation of a series of events by embodying in a typical personality an ardent passion. The protagonists of Marlowe's dramas are startling and potent. How far the presence of Edward Alleyn as a possible "Tamburlaine" inspired Marlowe's first production we do not know, or how far Marlowe's production inspired Edward Alleyn to be a great tragedian, we do not know; but history is certain of the fact that Tamburlaine and Alleyn climbed to glory together. Part of Marlowe's conception of an overpowering personality might have come from Alleyn's physique. Alleyn was almost seven feet tall, and it is not impossible that Marlowe's description of Tamburlaine is also a description of Alleyn. From physical greatness we involuntarily expect great deeds:

> "Of stature tall, and straightly fashioned
> Like his desire lift upward and divine;
> So large of limbs, his joints so strongly knit,
> Such breadth of shoulders as might mainly bear
> Old Atlas's burthen."

Tamburlaine. The play of "Tamburlaine" is a succession

of scenes, each scene more turbulent than the preceding,
with the most impressive coming last in Part I, and toward
the last in Part II. The deeds of the protagonist do not
react upon him to his destruction, in the sense of measure
for measure. He dies, the progress of his pomp cut off
simply by death, which comes in the natural course of dis-
ease. His end is fitting, however, since he has called himself
the scourge of Jove and at last finds himself subject instead
of monarch; but his catastrophe is not punishment, since
it is the lot of all men, good or bad, to die. Tamburlaine
dies with his lust of power unsatisfied.

The play has unity of a crude kind, although Marlowe
was oblivious to Greek ideals and had set himself against
Senecan conventions. His unity comes from the presence
of a central figure with an all-absorbing passion. Marlowe
had the art of establishing a thorough understanding
between the hearers and his protagonist. "Tamburlaine"
begins with the situation in Persia and with the "conceived
grief" of the king, which is:

> "God knows, about that Tamburlaine,
>   That, like a fox in midst of harvest time,
>   Doth prey upon my flocks of passengers;
>   And, as I hear, doth mean to pull my plumes.
>
>   .   .   .   .   .
>   Daily commits uncivil outrages,
>   Hoping (misled by dreaming prophecies)
>   To reign in Asia, and with barbarous arms,
>   To make himself the monarch of the East."

Scene 2, accordingly, is a well-executed presentation of the
Scythian highwayman holding up the convoy of the fair

Zenocrate, and immediately demanding her person. When she hesitates over how to address him, and stammers out, "My lord," he says:

> "I am a lord, for so my deeds shall prove:
> And yet a shepherd by my parentage.
> But lady, this fair face and heavenly hue
> Must grace his bed that conquers Asia,
> And means to be a terror to the world,
> Measuring the limits of his empery
> By East and West, as Phoebus doth his
>   course.

> "And, madam, whatsoever you esteem
> Of this success and loss unvalued,
> Both may invest you empress of the East;
> And these that seem but silly country swains
> May have the leading of so great an host
> As with their weight shall make the nations
>   quake,
> Even as when windy exhalations
> Fighting for passage, tilt within the earth."

After such high terms we expect great deeds. The motive that directs them enters in Act II, Scene 5, just after Tamburlaine, who up to this time has been but the leader of an army that makes and unmakes kings, has put the Persian crown on the head of Cosroe, the brother of the Persian king. The words are inadvertently spoken by one of Cosroe's followers in reply to Cosroe's impatience to sit upon his brother's throne:

> "Your majesty shall shortly have your wish
> And ride in triumph through Persepolis."

Tamburlaine catches up the word. "Ride in triumph through Persepolis," he keeps repeating to himself. And "Is it not brave to be a king?"

> "Why then, Cosroe, shall we wish for aught
> The world affords in greatest novelty,
> And rest attemptless, faint, and destitute?
> Methinks we should not: I am strongly
>   moved
> That if I should desire the Persian crown,
> I could attain it with a wondrous ease."

From here on we have the irresistible swing of the one mighty passion—"The thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown." The scenes rise in increasing truculence and in spectacular effect from that where the conqueror steps to his throne with his foot on the back of the victim, to the celebrated one where he rides on the stage in a chariot drawn by the four kings of Asia. The poetry, too, rises to real grandeur:

> "The horse that guide the golden eye of Heaven,
> And blow the morning from their nostrils,
> Making their fiery gait above the clouds,
> Are not so honoured in their governor,
> As you, ye slaves, in mighty Tamburlaine."
>
>   II: IV. sc. 4.

But Marlowe's absorption with the person and motive of this his first play, resulted in a reversion to a non-dramatic type in the catastrophe. As we have said, Tamburlaine's death is a natural one, and not consequent upon his deeds. Hieronimo's is consequent, and hence the more dramatic. Therefore "The Spanish Tragedy" continued

to divide the stage with "Tamburlaine." If a playwright meant to surpass these two popular pieces, it would be necessary for him to combine the strong elements of both.

"Tamburlaine" was productive of much imitation, comment, praise, and parody, a result that in itself helped precipitate the dramatic contribution. Peele, or whoever it was who wrote "The Battle of Alcazar," found in Stukely a bragging adventurer of Tamburlaine color, with the advantage that Stukely was British; but Peele failed to make his character structurally potent. Indeed, Stukely is not the protagonist of "The Battle of Alcazar." There is no protagonist in the Marlowean sense of the word. Mooly Mohamet the Moor is certainly of greater importance to the action than is Stukely, yet Stukely is the interesting figure. Peele had not learned the real lesson of the new rebel poet. Perhaps 1592 was somewhat early for the lesson to be well learned; yet the next year gives us Shakespeare's "Richard III." Peele's contributive ability proved to lie in another realm than that of tragedy. However, Peele has the credit of doing what Marlowe did not do in his first tragedy; that is, Peele clung to the traditional, strong catastrophe. Stukely is stabbed both by enemies and traitorous friends. Marlowe proved that his pulses beat with those of the people, nevertheless, even if he at first overlooked the advantage of a catastrophe at the end of his play. He gave the spectator such a series of startling situations as had never before been witnessed.

Doctor Faustus. In his next tragedy Marlowe, recognizing the popular liking for a catastrophe, chose dramatic material that yielded a time-honored spectacle. The con-

clusion of his "Doctor Faustus" is effectively drawn. It had for Marlowe's age a tremendous tragic significance. The theme of the play has had a fascination for mankind probably always, and in historical record at least since the sixth century. Marlowe's originality lay in his choice of this well-known legend for dramatic treatment and in his emphasis of the impelling force of an arrogant intellectual personality as a structural motive of tragedy. The very idea of an insatiable lust for knowledge is at once captivating and tragic. Marlowe rose to the grand possibilities of his conception only in places, but those are beautiful in both thought and poetry, one surpassingly so—all beautiful enough to hold the jaded reader of the present day and effective enough to have established themselves in literature.[1]

We have in Marlowe's "Faustus" an element of the Senecan drama in the presence of a chorus, elements of the moralities in the Seven Deadly Sins and in the objectifying of Faustus's conscience as good and bad angels. We have Marlowe's genius at its best and worst: at its best in the beginning, the Helen-of-Troy scene, and the catastrophe; at its worst, in episodes that take the place of what should have carried the action up to a noble presentation of knowledge as power. Instead of a rise to a high point, however, we are offered the dreary vulgarity of performances bidding for the applause of the groundlings. The explanation of the failure may lie in the fact that crisis and climax

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[1] cf. Goethe's Faust in his study at Wittenberg with Faustus in his.

cf. "Rich. II," Act IV, sc. 1, with Faustus. Sc. XIV, 281 ff: "Was this the fact," etc.

cf. "Troilus and Cressida" Act II; Sc. 1, "She is a pearl whose price has launched a thousand ships."

as elements of structure were not yet conceived. We have up to this time clear emphasis only of the protagonist and his motive, in addition to the catastrophe.

The Jew of Malta. The criticism that is generally made of Marlowe's Barabas is a mild disparagement to the effect that he did not turn out to be Shakespeare's Shylock. But that is exactly what he did turn out to be! The passion-driven Jew of the passion-driven Marlowe became in the heart and mind of the sunnier Shakespeare a human being. He failed, however, to be the structural line of the drama. The later play is rightly called from the point of view of structure "The Merchant of Venice," but from the point of view of character-study it would, of course, be correct to call it "Shylock," after its greatest personality. But that is just the issue here: Marlowe's emphasis made possible such character-presentations as Richard III, Richard II, Shylock, Macbeth, Iago, and King Lear. We can not imagine these as coming before Marlowe's work. To say that Shakespeare would not have developed without Marlowe is, of course, to talk nonsense; but to say that he would have developed without Marlowe in just the way he did develop is equally to talk nonsense. It is the mark of Shakespeare's genius that he learned the lesson of his predecessors and contemporaries and added his own contributions to theirs to make up the body of English dramatic technic. If he had not added, he would not have been surpassingly great. But he learned of the greatest and added to the greatest in the greatest way, and no one has as yet gone beyond him. The question naturally is whether anyone can go beyond him, whether the combined Marlowean and

Shakespearean genius did not give us, all in all, the greatest
protagonists and plays we shall ever see.

Edward II.   Critics since Charles Lamb's day have pretty
generally agreed that the catastrophe of "Edward II" is
one of the most intense of Elizabethan catastrophes (it occu-
pies practically the whole of Act V) and is, to some readers,
as productive of "pity and fear" as almost any in the
world.   Nor does it fail of being consequent upon person-
ality.   It comes about thus:

Edward has not practiced consistent dominance over his
nobles, but through alternate yielding and defiance has made
them bold and traitorous.   Self-indulgent to the extent of
continual neglect of duty, he has risen at last to action only
for a personal reason—to avenge the death of his minion,
not to forward the good of his realm or to vindicate his
fundamental right of kinghood.   He wins the battles, but
his personality costs him the ultimate victory.   He consist-
ently follows neither of two plans, one of which a strong
king would have followed.   We can imagine a magnanimous
warrior after he had proved his right to do as he pleased
forgiving the rebels and winning them to his support by
offering them preferment and participation in reformation
they would approve.   If this happy result were impossible
both because of his disposition and theirs, a provident king
would have sent the arch-rebel Mortimer to the block, as
well as the others.   But Edward follows neither of these
consistent plans.   He sends some to the block, but commits
Mortimer to the Tower, whence he escapes, flees to France,
comes back with the Queen and the Young Prince and com-
passes Edward's death.   Yet Edward, with all his mistakes,

is not unheroic, and his end is tragic and characteristically final. His destruction is accomplished in three steps: (1) the capture in the abbey; (2) the forced surrender of the crown at Kenilworth; (3) the murder in the dungeon at Berkeley Castle.

In addition to emphasizing the protagonist, Marlowe had demonstrated in "Faustus," in the "Jew of Malta," and in "Edward II" that the end of a tragedy should appear inevitable and consonant with personality. To realize what Marlowe's emphasis of a central figure with a persistent passion did for the structure of chronicle material one should read Bale's "Kynge Johan," Preston's "Cambises," and Peele's "Edward I." There is a title figure in each of these dramatic stories, but he is not individualized. The first is representative of religious tenets; the second, as we have seen, has no motives; and the third is merely a name to hold a string of incidents together. Marlowe's incidents, especially in "Edward II," are pertinent. Moreover, to reiterate: his catastrophes are those of marked personalities.

Shakespeare accepted this conclusion about the protagonist and the relation of the catastrophe to the rest of the play, and turned his attention toward extending the idea. The growth of his art shows the development of the presentation of personality into the presentation of character. Just as Marlowe's name stands among other things for the change of stage figures to stage personages, so Shakespeare's stands for the change of stage personages into stage human beings, brothers of us all. If our accepted sequence of Shakespeare's plays be correct, there is observable a growing consciousness of niceties of structure very interesting.

We will notice in this chapter only "Titus Andronicus," "King John," and "Richard III," and these from the point of view of the development of the protagonist.

Titus Andronicus. In the working over of older material that resulted in the play of "Titus Andronicus," there was brought a sort of unity to the epic succession of incidents by the emphasis of the revenge motive and the fact that the principal persons remain the same, though one after the other becomes the perpetrator of the revenge.

Just how much Shakespeare had to do with the structure of this once very popular tragedy, no one has as yet satisfactorily demonstrated. His part has been assigned to individual lines and short passages, rather poetic than dramatic contributions. In the light of "Hamlet," an interesting "aside" of Titus's is this:

> "I know them all, though they suppose me mad,
> And will o'er-reach them in their own devices."

The lovemaking of Tamora and Aaron recalls that of Belimperia and Horatio. Aaron himself recalls Ithamore in his diction as well as in his villainy.

The superiority of "Titus Andronicus" to many antecedent plays is found in the management of the motives and in the situations, a bit of technical skill we should expect to find by 1589. The memorable stage picture, of course, is that where Lavinia writes in the sand with a stick held in her mouth and guided with her stumps of arms.

King John. King John is not the protagonist of the chronicle play that bears his name. There is no protagonist in the sense of any one man who causes the action.

Shakespeare's work with the antecedent material in the "Troublesome Reign of King John" seems to have been the condensing of ten acts into five, the omitting of the comic scenes, the refining of characters, and the elaboration of the portrait of Falconbridge.[1] This analysis accords with what appears to have been the progress of technic in English tragedy up to the restaging of this old play. Shakespeare's additions show the focusing of attention on portraits. The explanation of the vogue of the chronicle plays as a type might almost be summed up in the two words "story" and "portraits."

Richard III. At about the same time as the redoing of the "Troublesome Reign," Shakespeare produced "Richard III," a Marlowean protagonist's play. Indeed, it may have been written with a composition by Marlowe as immediate foundation. It has his characteristics, and we need notice them here again but slightly.

There is the protagonist absorbing all the interest, doing most of the talking, occasioning all the action. He comes upon the scene precisely at the beginning, and boldly announces his motive and intended villainy. He has proved to be a popular protagonist ever since his first utterance. His part has been the favorite rôle of many great actors. His astounding impudence and princely success, despite his ill-formed body (which in another person would naturally cause self-conscious timidity) take the spectators by surprise and win their "admiration"—in the Elizabethan sense of the word. The singleness in the effect of the play results from the consistency of the protagonist's motive and per-

[1] Cambridge Editors and A. W. Ward.

sonality, and from the fact that he is actually on the stage in four-fifths of the scenes. Those from which he is absent are merely the short connecting ones and the murder of Clarence. Richard mounts highest at the coronation (Act III, Scene 7). From there on his murders are attempts to secure himself. He is finally brought to his death through the open resistance of Richmond at Bosworth Field. The revolt begins (IV, 2) passively when Buckingham refuses to echo the king's wish for the death of the princes, and when Dorset flees to Richmond; but there is no changing of dominance. Richard is still Richard. He goes on to the murder of the princes and the wooing of Elizabeth. There is thus seemingly still an outward flow of the action from the protagonist to the world, but there is in reality a deep undertow from the world back upon the protagonist drawing him down. The unity of the effect is secure, however, because of the delayed appearance of the antagonist.

That word antagonist is one to contemplate in the structure of English tragedy. We will devote our next chapter to it. One can not talk long of Shakespeare's protagonists without considering also their antagonists. The chief personages, like people in real life, are what they are, not only because of themselves and their own motives, but also largely because of supporters and opponents.

So much has been written of Shakespeare's protagonists in the way of character-study that we may well forego the pleasant exercise of repetition, and may cling more closely to the less familiar matter of the bare structure of the pieces. More important for us in this connection is the counter-play and the antagonist. Between "Richard III"

and "Macbeth," both presenting murderers, there is as great a difference in technic as there is in the portraits of the men. Between "Romeo and Juliet" and "Antony and Cleopatra" there is as great a difference in the action of the two plays as there is in the complexity of the passions revealed. Yet the difference in both cases is one of change on the part of the public as well as of the dramatist, and results from a shifting of attention on points of structure, concomitant with the development of a philosophy of character.

With "Richard III" we leave what may be called distinctly Marlowesque structure in English tragedy, the overpowering presence of a single character. The device of a central figure was clearly emphasized by 1593, and no dramatist thereafter could be oblivious to its peculiar advantages, especially in the way of apparent unity; yet manifestly also there was something lacking. Shakespeare had come across it at the close of the Richard III tragedy, and he chose to deal with it in "Richard II."

Chapter V

The Antagonist and the Action

To dramatists who were also writing intricate and sprightly comedies a one-man tragedy would of necessity seem juvenile if not tame. It would lack interesting complications however truculent the scenes might be. Besides, there was a potent fact that worked against the one-man action, namely, the sources of the plots of the plays. There are few stories concerned with simply one masterful man, especially among the stories from which the Elizabethans drew their material: the English Chronicles, Plutarch's Lives, and Italian *novelle*. In addition to the fact that the stage Tamburlaines are hardly natural in their general character, such a sweeping progress of tyranny seems untrue; for an attempt at masterfulness usually arouses adequate opposition, and not necessarily in unworthy men. Shakespeare found this truth staring him in the face when he came to the end of the Richard III story. "Richard II" is his recognition of the fact.[1]

"Richard III" is the first tragedy in which the opponent to the protagonist is of equal importance in the catastrophe. There we see Richmond asleep in his tent as Richard is in his, visited by the same ghosts as Richard is, and spoken

[1] If we should consider Shakespeare to have been at all intimately connected with the Henry VI plays, we might say that they represent, besides an interest in story and portrait, a sort of primer study in antagonism.

to alternately by them with only the difference that Richard is cursed and Richmond blessed. The source of the play is responsible for the fact that Richmond (who is to become Henry VII on that battlefield) receives unusual consideration; but Shakespeare chose the method of making him prominent. In true Marlowean style Shakespeare excluded any idea of remorse or twinges of conscience from the general course of the action, but here with the ghosts he brings in a slight touch. This was the popular method of indicating a man's perturbation—to have him see the ghosts of his victims. It was also a Senecan convention—at least the appearance and the retrospective narrative of beings from the other world were Senecan. As I have tried to show, the Elizabethans from their ancestry already had a sense of the tragic and a liking for thrilling situation even before the Senecan influence; but reinforced by Seneca and the Italian *novelle* the public taste inclined more and more toward the horrible and the gruesome. With their heavier imaginations and their lively sense of the dramatic, the English spectators preferred to *see* the thing done, whatever it was— murder or torture or battle. Shakespeare indulged them to the full in this play.

"Tamburlaine" had given them the torture and the battles, but not the plotted murder; "Faustus" had offered a sight of demons from the other world, but no battle; the "Jew of Malta" had afforded the plotted murder, but no protracted philosophical discussion and torture at the same time: the Jew was simply precipitated into his own cauldron. "Edward II" had set forth the torture and the battles but no ghost. "Richard III," however, offered them all—the tortures ac-

companied with sententious argument, the plotted murder, the ghosts, and the battle. No wonder the play was popular! Moreover, it was founded on the beloved chronicle history, presenting a national figure, a great personality taking great hazards and dying bravely. The scene (V. 4)

"A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!"

could not be surpassed for thrilling and desperate bravado. And finally there was the ring of patriotism about the ending of the play.

The significant fact for future structure was, however, that Richmond went forth alive. In that fact there was a Senecan-Greek convention, and the atmosphere of more story to come. Of course, the ending was to an extent imposed by the source; but so were the endings of the Greek and Senecan plays. The personages of the old dramas were no less known and their characteristics no less fixed in the common consciousness than were those of the new. Indeed, the heroes of Greek myth and tradition were better known to ancient audiences than were England's historical personages to the Elizabethans. Besides, what an author chooses for his subject somewhat reveals his idea of possible treatment; he realizes the difficulties at least before he has finished. Schiller realized them in "Wallenstein."

What I am trying to point out is that Shakespeare adopted in the "Richard III" catastrophe a slight Senecan convention, and may well have begun right there to think of tragedy not merely as a chronicle story with deaths in it but as representing a struggle. The mediaeval idea had been the "falling out of high degree"; but Shakespeare could

perceive by looking at Seneca that the older and more truly tragic idea included also a struggle with powers outside man and embodied in a definite personality. Marlowe had represented Mortimer as the opponent of King Edward II; but Marlowe, after he had presented the death of Edward, followed it with the death of Mortimer, in what critics indulgently call a little "epilog." Ideally the play of "Edward II" ends with the king's death, but not actually. Marlowe (in some ways the most dramatic and in some ways the most undramatic but surely the most obstinate and individual of our early playwrights) chose to add another tragedy, the execution of Mortimer. This is truly an epic convention, no matter how dramatic the addition may intrinsically be. Marlowe himself felt the new matter as another play, for he makes the queen remark when she sees the opposition to Mortimer, "Now, Mortimer, begins our tragedy." The young king Edward III appears, therefore, as a new protagonist and sends Mortimer to the gallows and the queen to the Tower. He also calls for Mortimer's head, which is cut off and brought in. Edward unites the two plays somewhat, however, by placing on his father's hearse the head of his father's chief enemy.

It has been remarked as another significant variation from Marlowe that Shakespeare weaves Nemesis into his play by means of Margaret's prophecies as well as by the presence of the final ghosts. Margaret is another touch of ancient tragedy, and Shakespeare seems to have caught the real dramatic function of the old choruses, although he does not write Margaret's part in the conventional form. He seems to have caught the idea better than Marlowe caught it in

"Faustus"; for in "Faustus" all that is said by the Chorus except the last stanza is narration.

One more fact that testifies to Shakespeare's possible attention to Senecan matters at this early date in his production of tragedies is the description of

> "the melancholy flood
> With that grim ferryman which poets write of,'

that we find Clarence giving as his dream just before his murder.

If I were called on to name the first thing that marks off Shakespearean technic from what went before and what came after, I should say: the development of the antagonist.[1] Shakespearean structure forms a distinct contribution to the world's tragedy. The result was brought about by a two-fold process, the conservation of all that had been gained in English practice and a return to the best in Seneca together with very definite and new emphasis. Accompanying Shakespeare's study was the gradual perfection of his own peculiar gift, inimitable character-revelation. I am not afraid of the word "study" in connection with Shakespeare's name. Every sane man studies to improve his powers: and Shakespeare was eminently sane. Moreover, the evidence that he studied structure is clear in his plays themselves. Many explanations may be given of this evolution of technic, and many factors, no doubt, entered into it; but we are concerned here not so much with the reason of the evolution as with the fact of the evolution.

Two title-pages of "Richard III," that of the Quarto

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[1] Kyd's Lorenzo might possibly be considered a foreshadowing of the antagonist.

of 1597 and that of the Folio of 1623, reveal a change in dramatic consciousness. The Quarto reads: "The Tragedy of King Richard the Third. Containing, His treacherous Plots against his brother, Clarence; the tyrannical usurpation, with the whole course of his detested life, and most deserved death. As it hath been lately acted by the," etc. The First and Second Folios read: "The Tragedy of Richard the Third: with the Landing of Earle Richmond, and the Battle of Bosworth Field." There were about two hundred lines added in the Folio, but none directly concerned with the emphasis of Richmond. What had changed was not Shakespeare's play, but the attention of the audience. People were trained by this time to look for the antagonist, whether the changed title was consciously meant to reveal that fact or not.

In "Richard III" the appearance of the conquering antagonist is delayed. Richmond first enters in Act V, Scene 2. The whole act is very short—about 457 lines; but since these are divided almost equally between the two contestants, Richmond gets a good deal of emphasis. He is mentioned likewise with increasing prominence from Act IV, Scene 1, where Queen Elizabeth says to Dorset:

"Get thee hence . . . go across the seas,
 And live with Richmond from the reach of hell:
 Go, hie thee, hie thee from this slaughter-house."

The next thing we hear is that Dorset has fled to Richmond. In an audience with Buckingham (Act IV, Scene 2) Richard muses thus:

As I remember, Henry the Sixth
Did prophesy that Richmond should be king,

> When Richmond was a little peevish boy,
> A king, perhaps, perhaps—

Buck.—My lord!—

Rich.—How chance the prophet could not at that time
> Have told me, I being by, that I should kill him?

Buck.—My lord, your promise for the earldom—

Rich.—Richmond! when last I was at Exeter,
> The mayor in courtesy show'd me the castle,
> And called it Rougemont: at which name I started,
> Because a bard of Ireland told me once,
> I should not live long after I saw Richmond.

The next we hear is (Act IV, Scene 3, lines 45-50):

> Ely is fled to Richmond
> And Buckingham, back'd with the hardy Welshmen,
> Is in the field, and still his power increaseth.

But we are not left in doubt as to who is the real antagonist:

K. Rich.—Ely with Richmond troubles me more near
> Than Buckingham and his rash-levied army.

Word comes in the following scene (433 ff.):

> —on the western coast
> Rideth a puissant navy . . .
> 'Tis thought that Richmond is their admiral.

And later (463 ff.):

Stan.   Richmond is on the seas.

K. Rich.—There let him sink, and be the seas on him!
> White-liver'd runagate, what doth he there?

Stan.—I know not, mighty sovereign, but by guess—

K. Rich.—Well, sir, as you guess, as you guess?
  Stan.—Stirr'd up by Dorset, Buckingham, and Ely,
          He makes for England, there to claim the crown.

Then a little later, as Richard thinks more about the matter, he accuses Stanley, who has offered to levy men (491-2):

K. Rich.—Ay, ay, thou would'st be gone to join
                with Richmond:
          I will not trust you, sir.

In Act IV, Scene 4, 534-5, we have

                the Earl of Richmond
      Is with a mighty power landed at Milford.

Then we hear of reinforcements for him and then the message of the queen to the effect that her daughter Elizabeth shall be his wife.

We shall see this idea of struggle of protagonist and antagonist (here confined in a brief fifth act) grow into a whole play—first, into a somewhat weak action still much reflecting Marlowean technic and, because of its lyrical quality, really less dramatic than Marlowe's own cruder production. Then, after a total freeing of the poet from Marlowe by means of an Italian love story and Senecan conventions, we shall see these very elements of the "Richard III" catastrophe grow into an elaborate and magnificent piece of structure which, nevertheless, defeated its own purpose because of an English traditional element. But we shall witness also the triumphing over this mistake later.

Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford, occupies a much larger part in the tragedy of Richard II than Richmond occupies in

that of Richard III. In fact, the first few lines of the later play present the antagonist's name by the King's own mouth. The spectator's interest is immediately aroused in Henry Hereford's "boisterous late appeal," and more in his character than in his "appeal." The king calls him bold, and we see him both bold and brave, resolute where the king is wavering and weak, frank and straightforward where the king is shifty. When the vacillating Richard changes his mind and refuses to countenance the settling of the quarrel between Bolingbroke and Mowbray by the quickest method, and, instead, banishes both, we feel dimly which is to return—the one the king fears most and seemingly punishes least. Bolingbroke's patriotic utterances and his lyric farewell would not fail to win the attention and concern of an English audience, even without the king's petulant description of him as a wooer of the common people:

> Off goes his bonnet to an oyster-wench;
> A brace of draymen bid God speed him well
> And had the tribute of his supple knee,
> With 'Thanks, my countrymen, my loving friends';
> As were our England in reversion his,
> And he our subjects' next degree in hope.

> (Act I, sc. 4, 31 ff.)

The whole play is practically a character study of these two men: the king the protagonist, and Bolingbroke his opponent.

Richard's changeableness is well exemplified from the first, where he commands, then yields, then recommends, and finally displays the utmost tyranny without either

bravery or consistency. In Act II, old John of Gaunt,
Bolingbroke's father, limns Richard's character very closely
and with his dying breath in querulous antagonism fore-
tells Richard's deposing of himself by his shameful indif-
ference to England's good.

In this play, while the catastrophe gives the groundlings
what they like (bloodshed and the knocking of life out with
an ax) the elaboration of it is really neglected. The author
is interested in the emotional meetings and the contrast of
characters in the course of the play. Immediately on John
of Gaunt's death, Richard indulges in the unjust and high-
handed confiscation of Hereford's patrimony and thus, as
York tells him, plucks a thousand dangers on his head, and
makes the meeting between him and Hereford inevitable.
Everybody is ready for Bolingbroke's return; and when he
comes, even his Uncle York, staunch old patriot and gov-
ernor in the king's absence, can but "have feelings of the
young man's wrongs," although he calls the young man a
traitor and a rebel. The suspense is kept up and the meet-
ing delayed after Bolingbroke's landing by the absence of
the king in Wales.

Act II, Scene 3 is a preparatory scene, showing Boling-
broke's increasing power as the nobles flock to him. Even
the Duke of York says, "It may be I will go with you."
From here on, the scenes are alternate between Richard
and Bolingbroke, setting forth the progress of each toward
the meeting, Act III, Scene 3. Richard partly foresees his
doom, and while he hears Bolingbroke's summons to a
parle utters a deal of his most fantastic and pathetic poetry.
However vacillating and weak Richard is, he hates to revoke

his word. He loves words better than deeds, and his greatest grief is that he must unsay what he has said. The revocation is the tragedy for him. He should have fought rather.

> "O God, O God! that e'er this tongue of mine
> That laid the sentence of dread banishment
> On yon proud man, should take it off again
> With words of sooth! O that I were as great
> As is my grief, or lesser than my name!
> Or that I could forget what I have been,
> Or not remember what I must be now!"   (ll. 133-139)

Yet we perceive that he does not really sense his destiny or feel the tragedy of it, but is rather pleased with his own embroidered melancholy (ll. 143-158).

He is king enough, however, to realize what it means for him to come down at the "traitor's" request. Lyrical and, as ever, playing on words, he says as he descends:

> "In the base court? Come down? Down court!
>   Down king!"

> (Act III, sc. 3, 183)

And he comes down to his own catastrophe; but not before the revocation has been elaborately repeated and emphasized. This matter of the reiteration of a scene at the middle of the play becomes a structural convention. We will look at it in another chapter.

We must seem to turn aside for a minute from a study of the antagonist, to notice the evidence of the beginning of Shakespeare's consciousness of "the action" of a piece and his study of Senecan matters. Shakespeare's conscious-

ness of action came about, it seems to me, from his pre-
occupation with the idea of antagonism, and his attempt to
enliven an old play with just those emphasized elements.

The antagonist in the tragedy of "Romeo and Juliet"
at first seems general like the antagonist, or counter-play, in
some of our earliest dramas. And yet there is a representa-
tive to be killed at each turn of the hero's fortunes. Romeo
slays Tybalt in a street fray just as Romeo has consummated
his desire in marrying Tybalt's kinswoman. Again, he kills
Paris after they both think that Juliet is dead and when
Paris comes to put flowers within the tomb and there meets
Romeo by accident. Romeo's deed is in both cases unwel-
come to himself, but it is a result of antagonism in general.
The whole play is in a sense a study of antagonism that has
become deep-seated and misery-bringing. "Oh, I'm for-
tune's fool!" cries the young lover, as he rushes away into
hiding after Tybalt's death. And though it is rather as the
fools of fortune and of chance that these young lovers move
forward to their catastrophe, they yet also seem to hurry out
to meet it. They bring death down upon themselves with
their own hands. Admitted that they do not court it, that
it is not suicide of a premeditated kind, but is an impulse of
fate; yet evidently the impetuosity of love at struggle with
an ancient feud forms the action of the drama.

The end is predestined. This fact makes for a Senecan-
Greek-Italian theme. The catastrophe is in only a very small
part a character-catastrophe. The action imposed upon the
theme was largely Elizabethan and new; but the theme was
old. The story, the course of events, the very scenario,
Shakespeare found ready at hand. He had Arthur Brooke's

metrical version of Bandello's *novella,* and the Painter's "Pallace of Pleasure" prose translation of Boisteau's French rendering. He may have had also an old play that Brooke mentions, which has not come down to us. At any rate, the events of this love tale were as well known and fixed as those of any of the chronicles, and were believed to be as historical. Shakespeare was in direct line with his own other work, therefore, in revitalizing characters of the past. Through the nature of the story, however, he was far away from the influence of Marlowe and very near that of Seneca. It is with its relation to Seneca that we want to study this play. Of course—and we might as well say it right here and we must never forget it—Shakespeare is always from now on in his own peculiar field, not plot-building, not invention, not soaring poetic discontent and magnificent revolt, but careful and re-creative delineation of his fellow-men. This is the first triumphant entrance of that field, and the poet is only just within the gates; but he is within, for here are evident masterful strokes of dramatic portraiture. With a few words he fixes forever as individualized immortals such subordinate characters even as the nurse and Mercutio. In another person's hands these would be the tiresome figures of the confidants.

But that is just the significant fact for us in this study: these are stock characters and this seems at bottom an old play, with many conventions of an earlier order. The more one studies the structure, the more one is convinced of the possibility. In addition there are tell-tale rhymes, puns, couplets, and declamation. Yet one is convinced no less surely that at the top it is particularly Shakespearean with the touch

and structure that only the new expert artist, who was now sure of himself, could give. Reconciliation between these two impressions is attempted by assigning to the production two dates a number of years apart: one early, before the chronicle tragedies; the other somewhat late, three or four years after them. But I have imagined a date even back of these two. Whether Shakespeare was remaking someone else's old play, or whether he was remaking his own old play, or whether he was remaking his own remaking of an old play written before he was born, a future scholar by diligence or good luck may be able to prove. In the meantime we can only speculate. We have the final version and it is extremely interesting in its structure. It is for this structure that we are going to analyze the play—not primarily as a study of antagonism, but primarily as a study of action. Shakespeare's emphasis of the antagonism will be apparent, however, as will also the importance of this play to his developing powers and his further interest in tragic struggle.

The fact is perfectly evident that Shakespeare, in his dealing with the "Romeo and Juliet" action, was thinking of Senecan conventions, Italian material, and his own new technic. To a student of the old and the new, the impression is as if Shakespeare had deliberately said: "Go to, gentlemen, I'll show you what is the matter with your ancient plays. They lack life, the life that captivates!" and had then breathed his own spirit into the Italian story, and set himself about the business of showing how Elizabethan popular dramatic devices could supplement and vivify Senecan conventions. It is interesting to know that it was

in 1591 that Robert Wilmot tried to bring up to date his old play, the one with which he had been concerned twenty-three years before.   It had been written in decasyllabic quatrains; he rewrote it in blank verse.   It had left one of the principal characters alive at the end of the action; Wilmot brought him to death.   Wilmot also changed the title; he wanted to emphasize the antagonist.   The play had been called "Gismonde of Salerno"; it was now called "Tancred and Gismunda."   This new version was printed.   The history of technic is as if Shakespeare had seen Wilmot's attempt and had said, "That's not the way to remake a Senecan drama.   Such a play will not 'go' on the stage today.   Something must be done to the action: the antagonism must be strengthened and the struggle emphasized."

In "Romeo and Juliet" we certainly have action far in advance of "Tancred and Gismunda," and we certainly have struggle emphasized.   Shakespeare chose material somewhat like Wilmot's, a pair of lovers meeting in secret, whose union if known would be opposed by the father of the girl; the lovers both coming to death and the father therefore coming to grief.   But the two authors have used the two lovers very differently in connection with the structure of the play.   In a previous chapter we saw what Wilmot did with them.[1]   Shakespeare makes them both protagonists and he gives them each an antagonist.   Romeo represents what we have come to call Elizabethan action, and Juliet represents Senecan action.   Whether Shakespeare was conscious of the fact or not (I think he was), or whether he thought as definitely as we have playfully imagined he did

[1] Chapter III.

(perhaps not), he certainly gave us a marvelous example of the two structures supplementing each other. In "Hamlet" and "Othello" we shall see him remaking both

We have only to recall our analysis of the "Medea" and the "Hippolytus" to remember what Senecan typical action is. The protagonist is under the control of outside forces that have gathered their strength before the play opens. The action consists of the formation of the resolve of the protagonist as to what to do and then the doing of it. At about the middle of the process comes the face-to-face meeting of the two forces. The contest is mental and is expressed wholly in words (not deeds), and the protagonist, settled in a resolve, goes forward to the execution of it, and thereby brings the catastrophe. The catastrophe is defeat for the opponent, if not death. In the "Medea" it is defeat for Jason in the death of his children; in the "Hippolytus," defeat for Theseus in the death of his beloved son. The protagonist sometimes comes off alive (Medea), and sometimes not (Phaedra). If the protagonist dies, he dies by his own hand, as Phaedra and Dejanira die.

Juliet goes through a crisis much like Medea's, a conflict with a double opponent. She appeals to her father, and when he proves harsh and relentless, she turns to her mother. Like Medea, Juliet determines to use the intervening time between the announcement of the decree and the day of the execution of it to outwit her opponents. She defeats them, but goes to her own death.

Now, I take it that Shakespeare knew where a Senecan play would begin, whether he was here remaking an old play or not. He knew, doubtless, that Romeo's killing of

Tybalt and all that went before it would be retrospective narrative, that the information probably would be imparted by the nurse and Juliet, and that the play would open not far from the present Act III, Scene 2. In fact, Juliet's monologue has in it all the information necessary for an understanding of the relation of the lovers, and it is not unlike the beginning of some Senecan dramas. The "Medea" so begins with fifty-five lines of invocation by Medea to the goddess of Night and secret ceremonies, including a retrospect of what has gone before. The "Octavia" so begins, with just the same number of lines (plus one) that Juliet uses. After the argument Juliet's "Gallop apace, ye fiery-footed steeds," etc., could well be the opening monologue of a Senecan play.

We can pretty clearly see what would have been the general process if Shakespeare in his "Romeo and Juliet" had been modernizing an old Senecan-like composition, supplementing it with material at hand in the popular *novella* and the metrical romance of Brooke, and changing all into an Elizabethan acting tragedy. But not to be impertinent and attempt to say what Shakespeare did or did not do, let us turn the supposition around and show how a pedagogue addicted to the old form would not unlikely have arranged matters and reduced Shakespeare's play to a Senecan "model." In other words, let us see if Shakespeare's play as it stands contains typical Senecan situations.

After Juliet's opening monologue, the dialogue with the nurse would follow, just as it follows here and just as it follows in the "Octavia" and the "Hippolytus" directly upon the first retrospective narrative, or as it follows in the

"Medea" preceded by the marriage-song in praise of Creusa. What the chant is to Medea, the throwing down of the ropes is to Juliet—a sign of the dissolution of her marriage.

After the woful news and the wailing (the Oh's and Ah's are typical of Senecan feeling), we find the announcement that the nurse will go seek out Romeo and arrange for his coming. This is a Senecan preparation; and the next two scenes, were this really a Senecan drama, would be as in the "Hippolytus," and indeed as they are here without the additions, the scenes of the nurse with the young man and of the young man with the woman who loves him. In one of these scenes would be arranged the information about the Friar's future position as counsellor to both. If the writer of the old-fashioned drama wanted to put in (as it is here) the dialogue between Romeo and the Friar before the appearance of the Nurse, and then to continue the scene into a dialogue of three (Nurse, Friar, and Romeo), he could find precedent in Seneca. In the "Agamemnon" the dialogue between Clytemnestra and the Nurse is extended into a dialogue of Clytemnestra, the Nurse, and Ægisthus. Or if this were a strict Senecan drama with a chorus, the Chorus might take Friar Laurence's part of emphasizing the particulars of Romeo's reception of the news of the banishment, and leave to the Friar but the shorter speeches in the conversation.

Now, of course, close upon the lovers' meeting would come the mother's announcement of the father's determination to marry the girl to the County Paris, as it is here. Then in would come the father for the stormy scene of the

crisis, as he does here. He would be ushered by the nurse probably, as he is here, and the Lady Capulet might retire, or, more likely, the Nurse would not speak as she does in Shakespeare's drama, but remain silent; for in most of the Senecan tragedies there are no more than three speaking characters on the stage at once. If there are more persons present than the three principal characters of the scene, the rest generally remain silent, as Philotetes does in the fourth act of the "Hercules Œtaeus."[1]

The writer of an imitation of Seneca, though, if he wanted the four people to speak, could find an antecedent in the "Agamemnon" where Electra, Clytemnestra, Ægisthus, and Cassandra are on the stage at once and Cassandra remains silent and hidden until dragged out at the end of the scene, when she makes two short speeches, the last of which ends the play; or he could have found precedent in the "Hercules Furens," where Hercules rages around and Amphitryon and Theseus reply to him, but Megara remains silent except for two speeches of remonstrance to save her child, like those the Nurse makes here. This could therefore be a regular Senecan scene without change.

The next scene after the crisis would be as it is here (without Shakespeare's additions to Brooke). Juliet would consult the Friar about her desperate situation, and they

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[1] Messengers and chorus do not count, naturally. They are in most cases on and off at the ends of the scenes, and do not give the impression of being characters, but only conveniences. In the Senecan plays the chorus is not always totally detached from the action, as we see that the meager remains of it are here in "Romeo and Juliet." In the "Troades" the Chorus and Hecuba carry on a conversation. In the "Hippolytus" the Chorus speaks with the nurse and with Theseus.

would decide on the sleeping potion and the sending of the
letter to Romeo.   These matters would about finish Act
III of the Senecan drama.

The next scene would be the beginning of the Senecan
Act IV, which, as we noticed in the outline of Senecan trage-
dies, is concerned with reports of the result of the crisis, of
deeds taken place off the stage, and with incidents, wailings,
and what prove later to have been preparations for the
catastrophe.   In the Shakespearean scene with Juliet, the
Friar very clearly outlines just what will happen as a result
of the sleeping potion; so that the maker of the Senecan
play could take over that speech without change (Act IV,
Scene 1), and would not need Shakespeare's subsequent
acting scenes.   Indeed, they would be improper in a "class-
ical" drama.   He would rely on this speech of the Friar's
beforehand and a report by the Chorus or messenger later
that the events had taken place.   That is, Juliet's supposed
death and the details of it would only be reported, as is the
death of Hippolytus in Seneca.

If the pedagogue wanted a reiteration of this, he could
have the Chorus ask the nurse to repeat the circumstances,
and she, amidst her own wailing, as here in Scene 5, could
tell of the grief of Lady Capulet and the others, and of the
funeral that is preparing.   Paris, who would not have ap-
peared in person hitherto in the Senecan drama, need not
appear now.   He could be taken care of by report.   The talk
between the Friar and Capulet (Act IV, Scene 5) could be
adopted, since in its moralizing philosophy it has a Senecan
tone.   The musicians would be left out, and their part of
comment be given to the Chorus.

Act V would probably open, not with a change of place and with Romeo, but with the Friar, who would tell about his sending of the letter and his now waiting for Romeo to appear. Instead of Romeo the messenger would enter (Friar John, who comes in Scene 2) and tell of the miscarrying of the letter. The next scene would be that of Romeo in the graveyard lamenting Juliet's death and telling how his own messenger had brought him news at Mantua and of his buying the poison which he means to swallow after he has entered the tomb. The Senecan writer could bodily take over Shakespeare's description of the apothecary's shop. It would be suggestive to him that the description is already in retrospective form, just as if it had been used in some such scene as this. Romeo would then proceed to open the tomb. He might not tell about buying the poison, however, but simply produce it at his next appearance. His words as he drinks the fatal draught, "O true apothecary, thy drugs are quick," would be sufficient to set the audience right. In the tomb (if the Senecan play were meant for the stage) the appointments would be meager. There was Senecan precedent for having the dead body on the stage. The remains of Hippolytus are gathered together before the eyes of the public (if it be permissible to imagine a public for Seneca), and Phaedra lies dead on the stage. In the old-fashioned play Paris would not appear. His part in the catastrophe is Elizabethan and Shakespearean. As Romeo utters his apostrophe and dies, the Friar might enter and Juliet awake, as she does in Shakespeare's play, and then, after the Friar has been frightened away, Juliet might kill herself with Romeo's dagger. Even this scene would have

clear Senecan precedent; for Phaedra kills herself on the
stage with Hippolytus's dagger.

The remainder of the play would perhaps be carried on
by the Chorus and the Friar. He might tell what is lacking
of the Romeo and Juliet story, as he does in Shakespeare's
play, and the Chorus, instead of the Prince, might moralize
on the evil strife of the two houses. Or somebody might
come into the tomb with the Friar, and Juliet might tell her
story for him, as Phaedra tells hers for Theseus. Then the
Friar's narrative could be left out. It is not necessary to
retell and explain the events acted. Narration is for deeds
not presented, is for the sake of the audience of a Senecan
play, not for verisimilitude as in the Shakespearean. There
would not appear in the Senecan action the many citizens
and the multiplied partisans of both houses, who would need
to be satisfied. These would be represented by the Chorus,
which could be wise or dull as the case might demand,
allude to the past or look forward to the future, and do all
the moralizing as well as some of the weeping.

But the reader is already protesting, "That old pedagogue,
though he has kept the main part of the action and prac-
tically the whole story, has cut out all the life! He has
taken away what Shakespeare would be most likely to wish
to have in." He has, indeed! Let us see what that is. It
is for the most part the first half of the play.

There is the street brawl. Though it is a fine pre-figuring
of the state of feud of the two houses, the Senecan tragedy-
maker could not use it. Anything so violent and full of
life and directly presented as that is, is a new thing and be-

longs to the popular stage. This is the first use of such a beginning by Shakespeare himself either in comedy or tragedy, though we shall find him employing it hereafter. Such a scene when detached is called the keynote scene, because it gives us the tone of the following piece.

Old Montague is cut out and Lady Montague; for they have nothing to do in the real Romeo and Juliet part of the action, except to come in with the crowd at the end. If the crowd is to be left out, they must go. The pedant sacrifices a good deal of poetry with these persons and he loses the presented antagonism of the two houses, but to be "correct" he must keep the action simple. If the Capulets and Montagues are not to meet in a presented quarrel, there is no need of the Prince, either. He is there to settle matters, and if there is nothing to settle——?

Benvolio goes, too. His function is to witness to the happenings and to help bring out Romeo's portrait. But if we are not to see Romeo's temper and tendencies before the crisis, indeed if we are not to see *his* crisis at all and he is to be a banished man most of the time of the Senecan play, why, of course, Benvolio and Mercutio, too, and the scenes they are in with Romeo are to be sacrificed. The Senecan imitator loses much more with Mercutio than with any of the others except Romeo, but he must be content if he prefers a restricted number of persons, restricted place, time, and action.

We cannot have the masquerade either. Such a thing was unheard of in Senecan drama. It strictly belongs to the vivacity of the Elizabethans. The street scenes leading up

to it would be excluded also, and the music and the running and chatter of the servants. We should lose even the "fiery Tybalt" and his altercation with my Lord Capulet.

The first meeting of Romeo and Juliet, too, would be but retrospective narrative, used in Juliet's first confidences with the Nurse. But what an incomparable scene would be lost! There is no use talking about it in the way of praise; everybody knows it and everybody that loves a lover loves it. One might argue that since it is a dialogue, the Senecan adapter might find room for it just as it is. But he could not, as direct presentation; for of necessity it must come before the of killing Tybalt and would therefore break the effect of the unity of time that one generally finds in Senecan plays. Obviously, much would depend on how strict our Senecan adapter of the story was. If he were very liberal, as some of the Elizabethan imitators were, he might present two scenes with the lovers, regardless of unity; but the probabilities are against the double appearance. He would be more likely to use the garden, the leaping of the wall, the moonlight, etc., for the beginning of the farewell scene, and hence actually present the lovers but once.

Friar Laurence's gathering herbs and the Nurse's meeting with Romeo are but the direct presentation of facts made evident in the second half of the play, and though they furnish poetry in the one case and the favorite Elizabethan punning in the other, are not necessary to clear understanding. They would be left out. So likewise would be omitted the earlier and later scenes presenting Juliet and the Nurse before the opening monologue of the Senecan play. They are not requisite furtherers of the action, but are instead

delightful character sketches. The Senecan adapter (if he were more than a supposition on our part, which of course he could not be) would hesitate to let them go; but he would let them go finally. And if there were an actual writer in English of a Senecan play on the Romeo and Juliet material before Shakespeare was born (a far more likely supposition), he would not have had the least idea of such scenes: they are not of his kind; they would not have appeared. They are thoroughly of the new age—Elizabethan; yes, more than that—they are bewitchingly Shakespearean.

Now, the most exciting scene, we say, we could not have in the Senecan version. We should not see the fight between Tybalt and the brave Mercutio, nor should we see Tybalt killed. The first time we should meet Romeo would be in the scene with the Friar and then with the Friar and the Nurse (Shakespeare's Act III, Scene 3).—But enough of the pedagogue's restrictions! What does all this similarity, and dissimilarity mean?

It seems not impossible that Shakespeare was to some extent using an old play and that it was decidedly of a Senecan complexion.

I do not presume to say just exactly how Shakespeare used the old play. Indeed, I do not for a moment pretend that there is any proof or that have advanced any evidence that he did not originally put the material of Brooke's narrative and of the "Pallace of Pleasure" together independently into the present tragedy of "Romeo and Juliet" and that the Senecan conventions did not come by accident; or that he was not independently with fresh material himself imitating Seneca. But I do say that explanation by the

hypothesis of an antecedent old play[1] is easy, is reasonable, is in keeping with Shakespeare's practice in relation to other dramas, does not detract from Shakespeare's glory (What could be a greater testimony to his power of vivifying and perfecting?), and accounts for a few discrepancies here and there and for the often remarked differences in the style of parts of "Romeo and Juliet" as we have it.

The idea that he might here be himself imitating Seneca seemed plausible enough at first to me, who believe in the advantages to a drama of classical convention rationally interpreted. But no other of Shakespeare's tragedies will bear the same analysis, and in those in which he was manifestly keeping Senecan structure in mind ("Othello" and "Hamlet") we cannot discover such exact parallelisms to Senecan order as here. If Shakespeare were imitating a Senecan play, why did he not conform entirely to the model and abide by the restrictions? To say that Shakespeare could not have worked within the limits of the Greek-Senecan-Italian-French classical, or whatever-you-want-to-call-it, form and have given us great tragedy is to deny all probability, is to maintain that Shakespeare was not so capable as Ibsen. To confess that Shakespeare did not confine himself within classical form is merely to say that neither he nor his audience fully appreciated the benefit of it (though this play helped him to grow somewhat into the appreciation). Shakespeare realized the need of something far more necessary here, and he attained it—life!

If Shakespeare had had the old play and if it were any-

[1] See H. DeW. Fuller, "Romeo and Julietta," *Modern Philology*, 1906.

thing like what we have imagined, it is easy enough to see what he would have done with it in general. He would have put into it what we have pretended to take out of his play. He would have breathed his spirit through the story; then he would have set himself to the joyful work of imposing Elizabethan popular dramatic devices on the old action, supplementing and enlivening. He would have vitalized the characters and set them to acting as they do act in his play, not have left them in mere declamation and narrative. He would have interspersed the monologues and dialogues of the second half with connecting, directly-presented events. He would have introduced Paris, not have left him as a mere talked-about figure, and (an Elizabethan convention) he would have killed him off at the end of the action. Prefaced to all would have been a development of portraits. The Elizabethans we have said, and Shakespeare no less than any of them, loved a story; but they wanted that story set up in actions, not mere narrative. As far as possible, they wanted to see the things happen. They liked to be present at lively combats and to hear witty repartee. They preferred bustling scenes to quiet ones. Shakespeare has given us all these innovations in "Romeo and Juliet."

Let me reiterate that I have not tried to *prove* that Shakespeare was using an old play. To reach a satisfactory result in such an attempt I should be compelled to take up other evidence besides the structure. The object of my supposition is merely to give a clear insight into the tragedy as we have it, and to show Shakespeare's preoccupation with antagonism and his attempt to secure lively action. Whether Shakespeare was making or remaking, we know

what he has done in his play. He has presented as acted events whatever is referred to as having taken place before Juliet's monologue and hers and the Nurse's dialogue. Those events are (taking them in the order in which they are alluded to and risking a little repetition): (1) the secret marriage of the afternoon; (2) Romeo's behest about the cords; (3) Romeo's slaying of Tybalt; (4) Romeo's banishment.

The first half of the play, then, is Romeo's half. He is much more like what we have come to call an Elizabethan protagonist than Juliet is. Romeo does a violent deed that turns his fortune downward. He "commits" his crisis. Juliet "suffers" hers. His is a deed; hers is a conflict of wills, a debate. His results in arousing outward opposition and punishment; hers results in outward reconciliation but inward resolve on her part of antagonism and counter-struggle to the death. He is no longer to be the director of events; she is just beginning to act out her will. He rises to his deed before the opposition; she rises to her deed because of the opposition.

This difference illustrates to a degree what critics mean when they say that usually in a Shakespearean tragedy the direction of the action changes at the crisis, that forces hitherto dominant become weak and new forces prevail, and these new forces bring on the catastrophe by way of an opposition on which the old forces wreck themselves; but that not so usually is it within the Senecan drama. Such is the relation rather between the forces acting before the opening of the play and those acting within the play itself; hence a Senecan tragedy is but the second half, as it were, of a

Shakespearean tragedy; or the second half of a Shakespearean tragedy is but a Senecan tragedy added.

Whether our supposition about an old play antecedent to "Romeo and Juliet" be correct or not, our analysis of the extant drama helps us to realize the difference between Elizabethan and Senecan structures; for the play certainly affords us an excellent example of the two coalesced and a parallelism in the very form and content of speeches between a typical Senecan action and the second half of a Shakespearean play. We shall not meet this remarkable parallelism of scenes again, but we shall need to deal often with the two halves of a Shakespearean play.

Of no other tragedy of Shakespeare is the literalness of the double-play statement so true as of "Romeo and Juliet." But, of course, critics who make that statement are usually thinking of the relationship between the protagonist and the antagonist in some other Shakespearean play where the antagonist represents the protagonist of the second half, or Senecan action. Here Juliet is not the antagonist of Romeo. She is a protagonist and has her own antagonist (her father); as Romeo is a protagonist and has his antagonists (the Prince, Tybalt, and Paris). Her play is not in the relation of a sequel to Romeo's, rather the contrary. The two plays, though seemingly put together end to end, are really in large part parallel and complementary, because of the amicable relation of the protagonists. I think, though, that Shakespeare considered the idea of the antagonism between their families. If Romeo and Juliet were enemies, Juliet's play would be a sequel to Romeo's. If Juliet had acted (as she in desperation pretended to her mother she

would act) to bring Romeo to punishment for Tybalt's death, then Juliet would represent the second play of a Senecan series, or what the critics are thinking about when they call the second half of a Shakespearean play a Senecan action; that is, a retributive action. Or if Juliet had gone off with Romeo, and Juliet's father had taken up the punishment idea and had set out and killed Romeo, we should have the relationship that the critics mean to state about other plays. Capulet's action would be to Romeo's action as the "second," or reverse, or return half of a "Shakespearean" play to the first half.

But such is not the story. Neither Juliet nor her father set out to punish Romeo. Juliet and Romeo die together. The two houses are reconciled, the antagonism is given up, and the two actions are coalesced. Naturally, the story imposed the coalescence; but it is conceivable that Shakespeare thought about the matter of retribution by an antagonist. There was opportunity in the story for a ghost's revenge play, and it was suggested by Tybalt's appearance to Juliet before she drank off the potion, but Shakespeare passed it over for the time being, with slight notice. He was thinking of the relationship, rather, between the actual protagonist and antagonist. When he chose material for his next tragedy, he chose a story with just this human retributive half. And he picked out for greatest elaboration the point where the protagonist and antagonist meet in verbal combat. A retributive idea is suggested in the Romeo story; and a verbal combat forms the crisis of the Juliet action.

Chapter VI

The Rise and the Crisis-Emphasis, Including the Tragic Incident

Shakespeare was emphasizing the retributive antagonist in the play of "Julius Caesar." It is not by chance that Mark Antony's oration is the most memorable part of the action. Structurally, it is the highest point, and, so far as is known, is also Shakespeare's most original contribution. Source hunters have looked in vain for the speech elsewhere. All they can find is no more than a few possible hints in Appian's Greek narrative of the civil wars of Rome, translated into English twenty-two years before Shakespeare wrote. North's "Plutarch," which the author of the play used freely, does not have the orations which form the crisis-emphasis, but only mention the fact that they were given and the effect they produced. A modern writer[1] thinks that perhaps he has found a partial source of Brutus's speech in Belleforest's "History of Hamlet," which tells "How Hamlet, having slain his Uncle and burnt his Palace made an Oration to the Danes to show them what he had done, etc." If this conjecture be true, it is interesting in relation to Brutus and Hamlet as character studies and helps reveal the possibility that when Shakespeare was writing the one play, he was also thinking of the material of the other. But the fact

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[1] Gollancz, in preface to Temple *Julius Caesar*, p. x.

(if it be a fact) in no way militates against our contention that Shakespeare here was deliberately emphasizing the antagonist and his retributive opposition and was elaborating the crisis-emphasis as a part of the structure of a play, but rather corroborates the contention. Whether Shakespeare originated both orations or only one, or neither, the telling circumstance is that he did not find them written out in the story he was reducing for his play. He made them up or imported them for a special reason. That he succeeded in his emphasis, history as well as a reading of the play attests. The most valuable reference that we have contemporary with the early acting of the play is that found in Weever's "Mirror of Martyrs," printed 1601. It is the chief evidence used in fixing the date of the composition, but it may be used here as a testimony to the success of Shakespeare's new point of technic. It reads thus:

> The many-headed multitude were drawn
>   By Brutus' speech that Caesar was ambitious.
> When eloquent Mark Antoine had shewn
>   His virtues, who but Brutus then was vicious?

Whatever the author of the "Mirror" meant by these lines, the fact is perfectly evident that the crisis-emphasis, the word-combat of Brutus and Mark Antony, the struggle of the protagonist and antagonist for supremacy, had made its impression. The people of Shakespeare's time did not miss the high point of his technic.

It is pertinent for us in this investigation that for other reasons than ours, critics place the "Merchant of Venice" not far in date from the later version of "Romeo and Juliet"

(1597), and the earlier record of "Julius Caesar" (1601). The Stationers' Register gives the year 1598 for the "Merchant of Venice" and the first quarto bears the imprint 1600. This relative position seems correct.[1] At least it corroborates our discovery of what was Shakespeare's interest in points of structure in a serious action at this time. The "Romeo and Juliet" relation we have suggested. The "Merchant of Venice" is almost tragedy. Shylock's punishment is in a sense retribution brought on by a special antagonist. It is worthy of note, too, that Shylock is overcome by an oration, with reasoning in a sense as specious and politic as Antony's. But with Portia as the orator and a love story as a continuation, the final action could not be tragic. There is, however, for the Shylock action a tragic turn.

Shakespeare meant to set Antony forth as a retributive antagonist of Brutus, not a contestant from the beginning as Hereford with Richard, but as one *roused* to action by a deed. In this relation Antony is not unlike a Senecan protagonist, who meets his opponent, the protagonist of a previous action, in a contest of words, pretends reconcilia-

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[1] Another argument for the lateness of the second version of "Romeo and Juliet" besides its structural relations, would be the artistic kinship of Mercutio and Gratiano. I do not recall having seen this likeness noted before, but students could not have missed it. Moreover, "Romeo and Juliet" starts the idea of retribution; the "Merchant of Venice" shows it in combination with another love story; "Julius Caesar" has it in tragedy; and "Hamlet" is a whole play founded on it. The date of "Julius Caesar" is practically fixed. The "Merchant of Venice" is like "Julius Caesar" in a number of structural ways. "Romeo and Juliet" has likenesses to the "Merchant of Venice." The sequence also of these plays is therefore probably fixed.

tion, but goes on to his own secretly determined purpose to punish the misdoer. Shakespeare thus has two plays to write: the play of Brutus and the play of Antony—or, if you please, the fall of Caesar and the revenge of Caesar. I do not think with Fleay, however, that Shakespeare actually wrote two plays on the subject of Julius Caesar, and that the one we have is a condensation of the two. Not at all, but rather the reverse, although the establishment of Fleay's guess would not vitiate our analysis. The technic seems to show that in the Romeo and Juliet tragedy Shakespeare got interested in the action-reaction idea and the verbal contest involved, and wanted to try them out. Whatever the reason, the fact stands that when he later came again to tragedy he chose popular material that had a retributive antagonist. But I do not believe that he was at this time thinking so much of the revenge action as of the mere reactive action. If he had been thinking structurally of the revenge of Caesar, we should indeed have a whole play from him on that motive, but with a more elaborate development of the ghost, an elaboration that we get later in "Hamlet." That he thinks of the ghost in "Julius Caesar" we know. It is far more developed than in "Romeo and Juliet." There he but touches lightly upon it. Juliet has an hallucination just before she drinks the potion: she thinks she sees her cousin's ghost seeking out Romeo and she cries him, "Stay!" Caesar's spirit comes into the tent of Brutus and speaks to him. It says that it will meet him at Philippi. But this incident is very late in the story and is retained from Plutarch to enliven the declining action. Shakespeare could have left it out, as he left out a number of startling details

of the narrative, but he needs some excitement in the later part of his play and hence retains the ghost. The ghost, however, did not occupy his mind. He was primarily interested, not in a ghost's play, but a man's play—the play of Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, and Antony.

Though the play is named "Julius Caesar" and though his personality overshadows the action of all, yet Caesar is not the protagonist in our technical sense of the word. Neither is Brutus really, but Brutus and Cassius. Plutarch distinctly states that those whom Cassius approached as conspirators declared that they would not move unless Brutus were won to be their chief. Part of the action, therefore, consists in winning Brutus; and Cassius does the winning. Two scenes are given over to this matter and they are very interesting. It is conceivable that in the course of writing them Shakespeare himself became fascinated, as modern critics are, with the problem of the influence of Cassius on Brutus; for Shakespeare gives us later an entire play on a similar relationship (Iago and Othello). Structurally, the winning of Brutus is subordinate to the killing of Caesar. Hence, we soon find Brutus the center of the conspiracy. Cassius, though, does not cease to suggest and incite. In the material sense he is the motive force of the action; in the spiritual sense, the thought of killing Caesar is the motive. It is the going forward with the idea furnished by Cassius that brings Brutus to the crisis-deed; to be sure, he entertains the thought and does the deed in his own high-minded way, but it is still Cassius's deed also. These two are in a real sense a double protagonist, much more so than Romeo and Juliet. Romeo and Juliet are in effect two protagonists,

separated for a large part of the time. Brutus and Cassius are one, complementing each other always. Shakespeare has much to thank his source for, but the marvelous balancing of these characters in imitable dialogue is his work, and it is superb dramatic achievement. His selecting of incident and his interpretation into direct speech is unerring. We cannot omit either Brutus or Cassius from this play. They are both essential to the action.

As it is the following of the idea of Cassius that brings the accomplishment of the crisis-deed, so it is the abandonment of his methods and the following of Brutus's that gives place to the catastrophe. Antony becomes the antagonist of both. Cassius had urged the death of Antony as well as of Caesar. Through magnanimity Brutus leaves alive the one man who would have ambition, personality, and power enough to bring the conspirators to judgment. Antony is not unskillfully introduced into the early part of the play, though he appears very little before the crisis-deed. His first words are, "Caesar, my lord?" and his next, "I shall remember." Such work is not accident; it is put in deliberately. Antony is the one who remembers when everybody else seems to forget. Hence the tragic turn of events.

Antony, we say, is Shakespeare's first emphasized retributive antagonist. We note a growing particularity and immediateness of tragic struggle in Shakespeare's plays. In "Richard III," late in the action, a representative of one kingly line takes the victory and battle from another. In "Richard II" a weak king lets the power slip away from his hand into those of a strong and opposing subject, who thereby becomes sovereign. In "Romeo and Juliet" one proud

house at strife with another proud house is brought to reconciliation by the death of their children. In "Julius Caesar" citizen is roused against citizen for a particular deed.

This deed is the material crisis. The consummation of it is reached in the first ninety lines of Act III, while the return of it on the doers' heads occupies the remaining two hundred and seven lines of that first scene, and all the two hundred and seventy-six lines of the second and the forty-three lines of the third. These four hundred twenty-six lines are the crisis-emphasis including the tragic turn. It is accordingly evident that in the mere number of lines in the play Shakespeare was much occupied with the return of the deed. The remaining two acts are, moreover, a continuation of this scene. Now, the material crisis, the deed, was definitely settled by Plutarch and history. It was not necessary for Shakespeare to create that; he could simply transcribe it. His original work therefore as a dramatist lay in connection with the rise to that crisis-deed and the return from it.

The rise to the crisis is well managed. It proceeds through one step—the conspiracy, which is divided into four scenes: the meeting at the house of Brutus at three o'clock in the morning, that at the house of Caesar a few hours later, and two little connecting scenes. One of these is to show us Portia, and the other is to prepare for an incident in the crisis where Caesar puts away the only chance he has to save his life. Besides the contrasting character-sketches, the reverse parallel arrangement of these two larger scenes is noteworthy. The first one is between Brutus and the con-

spirators and then Brutus and Portia; the second, between
Caesar and Calpurnia, and then Caesar and the conspirators.
The assassination is the crisis-deed.

Now, the occurrence of the orations was no less fixed by
history and Plutarch than was the assassination; but the
writing out of those orations and the arranging of them as a
crisis-emphasis is what occupied the creative power of the
dramatist. The character portraits also were found at full
length in North. Where the opponents meet in antagonistic
struggle is where Shakespeare's play enlarges on the nar-
rative statements, at the same time that it condenses the
period represented and reduces the number of events.

We find that Antony's prominence does not come upon
us entirely by surprise; we recall his first words, "Caesar,
my lord?" and "I shall remember." In Act III he is there-
fore "remembering." We recall, too, that the astute Cassius
feared that Antony would remember. On the night of the
conspiracy, when Decius asked Brutus if no man else were
to be touched but only Caesar, Cassius spoke up and recom-
mended that Antony be taken care of. But Brutus made a
fine, long, philosophical reply, fooling himself with figures,
and they now come back upon him with tragic irony. The
conspirators have the first scene of the crisis, but Antony
has the second, and the people have the third! Cassius
had said, "We shall find him a shrewd contriver." It is
manifest that no Senecan protagonist ever dissembled to
better purpose than Antony. The immediate preparation for
Antony's speech starts back in Scene 1. With the stage
direction *Reënter Antony* begins the struggle of wills and
words. The two contestants are here most evenly balanced.

Brutus has the power, but is negligent; Antony has no
power, but is watchful—the Creon-Medea situation. Like
Medea's, Antony's power lies in his "mental attributes,"
if he can but get a chance to exercise them. Brutus's prom-
ise that after he quiets the multitude he will deliver to
Antony the cause why he, who loved Caesar, struck at him,
is about as comforting to Antony as Creon's assurance to
Medea that he will look after her children—"*Vade, hos
paterno, ut genitor, excipiam finu.*"   Antony, with certain
biting references to the bloody work that the conspirators
have done, asserts that he doubts not of their wisdom, but
seeks only the opportunity to accord to his friend the proper
funeral speech. Medea, with biting references to Creon's
unstable throne, begs only the time to imprint a few last
kisses on her children's cheeks—"*Parumne miserae temporis
lacrimis negas?*"   When Creon yields her a day, she says:

> *Nim is est; recidas aliquid ex isto licet.*
> *Et ipsa propero.*

When Brutus tells Antony,

> 'you shall speak
> In the same pulpit whereto I am going,
> After my speech is ended,'

Antony says,

> 'Be it so;
> I do desire no more.'

The shrewd Cassius, like the shrewd Creon, felt the mis-
take while it was being made, but could not stop it. The

conspirators must now abide the consequences. Mark
Antony turns to prepare the body as the murderers leave, and
offers his prophecy of wide-sweeping ruin and civil strife,
"with Caesar's spirit raging for revenge." The allusions to
"Ate," "hell," "revenge," and "havoc" surely do not lack
Senecan tone. Medea threatens,

> 'invadam deos,
> Et cuncta quatiam!'

and every schoolboy knows how Antony shook the whole
round world.

This somewhat far-away likeness does not mean that
Shakespeare was copying Seneca, but that Shakespeare was
thinking a good deal about Senecan technic, especially the
structure. I say "especially the structure" because, while
the great scene of the crisis-emphasis is Greek-Senecan in
framework (the same chorus of citizens answering in turn
the speech and fervor of declamatory contestants), it is truly
Shakespearean in its thought and beauty. Shakespeare uses
Plutarch's narrative of the results of the speech with true
dramatic and forensic insight. We feel that Antony must
have spoken and acted just so. Our conception of him as an
orator is derived wholly from Shakespeare. We feel that
Shakespeare is only reporting and that this is the actual
scene; yet we know that even Plutarch, Shakespeare's source,
is very different. This is Shakespeare's oratory that we
hear, as is Brutus's speech also. Shakespeare had an ex-
ample of Brutus's laconic diction in some letters reported in
Plutarch, but the speech, like Antony's, is invented. How
different is it from Antony's, yet how characteristic of the

proud, impractical philosopher that Brutus was! Massinger, a close student of Shakespeare, adopts the oration device, which he uses more than once and to good effect (three times in a single play), but he never reaches the height of his master.

It is not the fact that this scene is composed of orations, however, that makes it technically the scene of the crisis-emphasis, but the fact that it recalls the crisis-deed, intensifies it, interprets it, and with a surprising turn makes it fatal to the conspirators. The effect has been prepared for, we say, but it is none the less startling; for it is the coming into recognized consciousness of what has all along, in the rise to the crisis, been subconsciously awaited. What comes, however, as a result of Antony's speech is not the catastrophe, which on reflection we think we really expected, but a tragic turn following the tragic incident. Hence the action of the play is not finished, but only turned irrevocably toward the catastrophe, which is yet to be acted out.

By *tragic incident* is meant that small happening that emphasizes the spirit of the tragedy as a whole, or the events of the crisis just past, and illuminates the course of disaster already entered upon or about to be entered upon by the protagonist. If the downward fall toward defeat and death is not already clear, then the tragic incident becomes a *tragic turn*. In "Julius Caesar" the course of the action is changed by a fatal mistake of Brutus's. The mistake results from an inherent excellence in character. Out of philosophical generosity and high-toned pride Brutus gives Antony leave to speak, and even escorts him to the rostrum and orders the people to stay and hear. The surprising

response that follows Antony's speech with the turn of events against the conspirators is consequently Brutus's own doing, is therefore truly tragic.

It is this emphasis of the return of the deed, however, that cuts the play in two. By Antony's reviewing of the conspirators' action, he starts a revolt and occasions his own supremacy. The downfall of the conspirators is in a sense the rise of Antony. He goes forth alive at the end of the play like a Senecan protagonist. The play has two crises, then, or crisis-deed and crisis-emphasis, as we technically call them: the stabbing of Caesar by the Brutus conspirators, and the struggle of Brutus and Antony in debate. The crisis-emphasis includes the tragic turn. But unity is lost here that was retained in "Romeo and Juliet." Since there the two crises were divided between the two protagonists and victory went with one of the protagonists, the play could be continued without a loss of interest. Here, however, the crises are divided between the protagonist and the antagonist, and the final victory is with the antagonist. The protagonists' action is accordingly in one sense really done at the middle of the drama. Thereafter Brutus and Cassius are on the defensive. When they flee from Rome, the spectators' interest naturally lapses. Antony has not been long enough before the minds of the spectators for them to take as deep an interest in his further actions as in those he has just finished on the immediate scene of the crisis. His part has really been to emphasize the crisis and form the climax of the play.

Herewith climax becomes to Shakespeare a definite problem. We shall find him pursuing it closely, and finally con-

quering. He realized that the crisis-emphasis is a strong point of structure, as is shown by the fact that he employed it consistently thereafter, but without the mistake that he makes in this play. He changes the position of the crisis in subsequent tragedies, he changes the relation of the antagonist, but he keeps the crisis-emphasis as it is here in place and function.

"Julius Caesar" is one of the best known, if not the very best known, of Shakespeare's plays. It has been translated into "the strangest" languages and dialects, and its action has often been taken as typically Shakespearean. In one sense, this idea is correct; in another, it is very misleading. There is hardly such a thing as a typically Shakespearean tragic action. Shakespeare is constantly experimenting, and as a practical playwright is always improving in some points. He can go often beyond himself even if others cannot go beyond him. But in one sense this double action of "Julius Caesar" is typical of all Elizabethan tragedies—that is, in the sense that the action of each play is carried out to the end of the life of those who began it. The generally accepted emphasis of the catastrophe as death to all is probably responsible partly for this convention. Shakespeare is also partly responsible. The crisis that Shakespeare has in the middle of the play of "Julius Caesar" is really in one sense a catastrophe—the close of the Caesar-Brutus tragic action; but Shakespeare is interested in the return stroke and will not stop. He goes on to the tragic-emphasis of this crisis and the emphasis of the antagonist (the Brutus-Antony action) to the dividing of his play. But that he realized both his success and his failure seems patent. At least it

seems patent to those who, knowing his past development, study his next play.

But before we go on to that analysis we ought to stop to sum up what Shakespeare has arrived at in "Julius Caesar," and to try to conceive what critics mean by a "typical Shakespearean action." We see that Brutus is represented as gradually rising to a terrible deed in an extremely characteristic way, and that the issuing of that deed out of the character of Brutus causes a reaction in which Brutus and his associates go down to a death catastrophe. We know that the going down and the death catastrophe were well established hitherto, as was also the doing of deeds, murders, suicides, fights, executions, or what not, before the end or even the middle of the play; but "Julius Caesar" is the first of our extant tragedies in which we see the protagonist definitely and steadily rise to a single crisis deed, willed by him, expected by the audience, and elaborately executed in a well-organized scene or scene-group, unpreceded by violent and distracting incidents.

Now let us look at Shakespeare's earlier tragedies to see whether it is true that there is in none of them a steady rise to a definite crisis. The action of "Richard III" is a series of murders with the most directly presented coming in the first act. The king in "Richard II" wavers among banishment decrees, wars, recalls, resistance, and abdication. There are at least three places for a crisis. In Act IV, Scene 1, there is a repetition of the meeting of Richard and Bolingbroke which occurred in Act III, Scene 3, about the matter of supremacy. In Act IV Bolingbroke calls upon Richard to deliver the crown, and Richard hands it over with much

accompanying sentimentality and rhetoric. This scene is quite fantastic, but it has in it some beautiful verse and a passage or two of acute pathos. As Richard "ravels out" his "weaved-up folly," however, we get a little tired. The scene had possibilities for a crisis-emphasis, if the details had only been restrained and if there had been a definite crisis to emphasize. With this scene to reinforce it, Richard's abject yielding to Bolingbroke in Act III might have been made a definite point of technic. After it, we see Bolingbroke ruling. He holds the trial of Aumerle. But the reinforcing scene is out of place. It is somewhat of a setback to view a second time the meeting of Richard and Bolingbroke over the matter of supremacy. The later scene has the effect of recalling the earlier, but rather as a far-off echo than as a good strong accompaniment. Moreover, the other scene, while logically the crisis, is not made clearly so in the drama; for before it Bolingbroke is presented as already exercising kingly prerogative in Act III, Scene 1; that is, sending Bushy and Greene to death by a decree. By the time we reach the reiteration of the meeting, therefore, he has exercised royal power for seven hundred and ninety-four lines.

These fluctuations of a possibly definite point of technic convince us that though Shakespeare had a firm idea of the clash of characters, he had not yet in 1597 clearly conceived the structural function of the middle of the play as crisis or crisis-emphasis, nor the rise to these. The one would have made the other two. Or, perhaps, as the order of my chapters in this book reveals that I suspect, the crisis-emphasis as an artistic entity really came into consciousness before the crisis as a purely artistic entity developed. It seems that the

result of the crisis-emphasis in "Julius Caesar" occasioned the making of subsequent narrative crises into dramatic crises.

A bit of historical evidence is interesting here. For we know that these lines (Act IV, Scene 1, 154-318) did not appear in the first published or acted (?) version of the play (Quarto One, 1597), but came into notice with Quarto Three, 1608, the title-page of which reads, *"with new additions of the Parliament Sceane, and the deposing of King Richard, as it has been lately acted by the Kinges Majesties servantes at the Globe."* The interpretation of the appearance of these lines for the first time so late as 1608 has usually been that they were the mere restoring of a scene originally written when the rest of the play was composed, but suppressed because of Elizabeth's aversion to any mention of deposition and her particular susceptibility about Richard II. Indeed, historical record of the suppression of other references to the deposition would bear out this theory. Were this solution not so easy, the student of structure might offer another; namely, that after 1600 Shakespeare was conscious of the crisis-deed and crisis-emphasis as points of structure, and returned to an earlier play and inserted or restored a scene in order to strengthen the middle of the action. Perhaps Shakespeare had come to think that the ascending of the throne was the deed that marked the real crisis and that the emphasis of that would be serviceable to the whole effect. If such were his thought, this insertion would be natural, and would come, as it does, immediately after Carlisle's objection to Bolingbroke's

"In God's name I'll ascend the regal throne."

This face-to-face meeting of Bolingbroke and Richard, where they both hold the material crown literally by either side, would be indeed a crisis-emphasis if, as we have said, there were a preceding crisis; for a crisis-emphasis is a scene that does not actually repeat an earlier, but in some adequate way compels a mental review of the action up to that point and intensifies the crisis by indicating the tragic results of what has gone before and by anticipating the catastrophe through suggestion and a tragic incident.

In either case, we are left with our original proposition that "Julius Caesar" is the first of Shakespeare's extant tragedies in which there is clear evidence of a consciousness of the crisis-emphasis as a functional point of structure.

There are two protagonists in "Romeo and Juliet" and two crises, as we have seen, but they are not like the two crises in "Julius Caesar." Romeo comes upon his crisis by accident and wishes to avoid it. His deed, not long prepared and debated over, is a quick stroke of friendship and duty for Mercutio's death. The audience has been prepared for some such stroke, but Romeo has not. It is only in a very limited sense an expression of character; it is rather the issuing of Italian tribal animosity into a deed made necessary by antecedent circumstances and present accidents over which Romeo had little control. But Brutus's is an expression of character. He strikes at tyranny! Poor foolish philosopher, he finds to his dismay that tyranny does not after all dwell in the one weak body of Caesar, whom he really loved, but in the many-headed crowd that, led by Mark Antony, revolts against him. The rise to this effective scene, besides the ordinary mechanical preparation for the

events, is therefore necessarily character revelation; in fact,
is also character evolution.

The only plays before Shakespeare in behalf of which one
might challenge the statement about a lack of steady rise to
a definite crisis would probably be Marlowe's "Jew of
Malta" or "Edward II." But the "Jew of Malta," despite
its reputation for good technic, is episodic. Each episode is
well prepared and executed, but the question in this relation
is, Which one is the more important? Which is the definite
single crisis? Is it the one where Barabas gets his money
by the aid of Abigail? Is it where Ithamore deserts him?
Is it where he is thrown over the wall as dead and comes
to life again? Or is it where he attempts to lead the Turks
to his fatal bridge over the cauldron? "Edward II" not
only presents the two catastrophes of Edward and Mortimer
at the end of the action, but has two successive plays of the
favorites within. Which is the important crisis—the one
where the king gives up Gaveston, the one where he gets him
back, the one where the nobles kill Gaveston, the one where
they demand Spencer, or the one where Edward flees?
Faustus we know indulges in a dreary display of his power,
in no sense an adequate rise to the beautiful effect of calling
up Helen of Troy. "Tamburlaine" we need not mention.
The nearest scene to a crisis there is where Zenocrate dies
and Tamburlaine finds himself for the first time powerless.
But this is in no real sense a crisis and a reaction; for
Tamburlaine has not brought Zenocrate to this place, nor
have Tamburlaine's enemies. A nearer approach to a return
action is his failure with his son, whom he feels impelled
to stab for cowardice. "The Battle of Alcazar" gives us

Stukely's rise only in retrospect, and presents, instead, the murders of Mooly Mahamet the Moor.

But these bare possibilities need only be mentioned to show how far away they are in technic and beauty from what we have reached in the great central scenes of "Julius Caesar." "The Misfortunes of Arthur" comes nearer to having a contest like that in "Julius Caesar," but the "Misfortunes of Arthur" would represent the second half of the play— the punishment of the conspiracy, the revolt of the deed upon the traitor's head. Perhaps this likeness is the touch-stone of explanation. Shakespeare was drawing nearer to classical conventions. When he seemed farthest away, in the sense that he had two plays in one, he was really nearer. He needed only acknowledge the fact and let them fall apart; then heighten a little the character of Caesar, who would make the antagonist in the first half, and develop a little the character of Antony, who would make the protagonist in the second half; then, reaching into the future, get the "Antony and Cleopatra" tragedy, compress it, and set it up beside the other two. There would be Shakespeare's trilogy! And it would be better than any Senecan trilogy, and no worse than many readers have secretly considered the Greek trilogies! But who would exchange it for the next four "isolated" plays—"Hamlet," "Othello," "King Lear," and "Macbeth"?

Yet howsoever much we turn away from Seneca and howsoever much we like to join the popular critics and be-wail his influence, we must, if we are honest students, ac-knowledge the beneficial contribution from classical drama that he handed over to English tragedy. We are glad that

he did not dominate English tragedy and that men like Marlowe and Shakespeare were virile enough to maintain themselves a good while independent of him—until English conventions had time to establish themselves; but it is nevertheless to be admitted that some restraint of technic was desirable in compositions like "Tamburlaine," "The Battle of Alcazar," "Alfonsus of Aragon," and even "Richard III." In "Edward II" and "Richard III" it is noticeable that some of the murders are enacted behind the scenes, a fact that bespeaks a growing idea of real climax. In "Romeo and Juliet" we have imagined Shakespeare as studying Senecan structure, and with unerring genius retaining or selecting or adopting the best things, and quickening them with Elizabethan spirit and technic. In "Julius Caesar" we find him trying out some of these ideas, the retributive motive and the verbal debate. Twice we have the verbal debate—once the more Senecan one between Brutus and Cassius; once the more Elizabethan one, the stirring orations. We see the speeches of the contesting opponents, such as we had in the "Richard III" catastrophe, grown here in the "Julius Caesar" into real functional political orations. The ghost, too, has been stepping farther toward a controlling place in the action. In the next tragedy, at any rate, we find Shakespeare dealing with a full Senecan theme.

Chapter VII

The Crisis, the Climax, and the Arrest of the Catastrophe

If we are correct in allowing Shakespeare as much intelligence concerning matters of structure as the most ordinary critic among us (that is, the ability to see a mistake after it has happened, and to recognize an excellence after it has been evolved), we shall also be correct, then, in imagining him dissatisfied with the fact that the play of "Julius Caesar" breaks in two, but pleased with the fact that he had struck off an excellent piece of technic in the gradual rise to the crisis, and had reached a striking dramatic effect in the crisis-emphasis and the tragic turn. To an acute and practical dramatist, who was interested in structure as well as in philosophy and story, and wished in his next production to avoid the technical mistake in "Julius Caesar," what material already at hand would appear better than the old "Hamlet" story, or play? There were there the unpleasant family relations, to be sure, and the usually unpleasant ghost; but there was also the advantageous revenge motive to bind the play together and there was the hesitating philosophical protagonist for a possible skilful rise and a delay of the revenge stroke.

It might be argued that all the beauties and subtleties of the "Hamlet" action come by chance, and that Shakespeare

did not know what he was doing. But surely such a contention would belittle any dramatist who could write a play like "Hamlet," and particularly would do Shakespeare gross injustice. It seems evident that he knew what he was doing and chose his material advisedly, not only because of the popularity that the subject had at that time, but also because of the possibilities of structure that he had now come to see in the material. If Shakespeare as an actor took a stage part in "The Spanish Tragedy," as is possible, he would hardly be indifferent to the central advantages of the revenge motive, and he might well have pondered between cues on the dramatic faults and virtues of old Hieronimo. To say nothing of the Ur-Hamlet, in the light of the known popularity of Kyd's play and the quotations from it in contemporary drama, as well as its ownership by the Lord Strange's men, one cannot think of Shakespeare as "stumbling" upon the hesitator protagonist or the play-within-the-play device. But even without this contemporary testimony one could not think of Shakespeare as coming untrained into possession of the excellences of structure of the "Hamlet" action. It is logically the next step in advance after "Julius Caesar."

We cannot go into the question of the authorship of the original "Hamlet" nor of how much of the structure of Shakespeare's play was there represented. One would believe with Furnival that to Shakespeare is due the honor of the hesitator motive—not the inception of it, as Furnival seems to imply, however (for surely the suggestion is found in "The Spanish Tragedy"), but the working of the idea out structurally. If our discoveries so far have been real dis-

coveries (namely, the progress of Shakespeare's attention to the larger points of structure in tragedy), surely the "Hamlet" crisis is the next step, and if that had been taken before by someone else it seems strange that Shakespeare should have arrived so slowly at a consciousness of its advantage. However, as was said, we are not in the controversy of Quarto One, Quarto Two, and the Ur-Hamlet; but rather have we the object of seeing the advance toward ideal structure represented in the finished plays of Shakespeare.

The advance of "Hamlet" on "Julius Caesar" lies in the management of the crisis. In "Hamlet" it is kept wholly mental, the crisis-deed is delayed, and the avenger and the victim die together. This fact is a decided change from the narrative source. The author of the drama seems to be seeking climax; in other words, seeking to place fulfilment of expectation nearer the end of the action. The fascination of the Hamlet tragedy as a piece of structure is just this delay of the revenge stroke. That Shakespeare makes the delay marvelously a matter of character is his triumph over his predecessors and is his improvement on what he had achieved in the Brutus-Antony action. We say that that action may be described as the rising of a protagonist to a planned material stroke that arouses an antagonist to an opposition on which the protagonist wrecks himself. But such an action is disunion. In "Hamlet" the material stroke is delayed, and in its stead, at the place where it should be, is inserted a mental stroke, which has a peculiar effect: it performs for the structure of the play the same function that the material blow would have performed; that is, it

marks the crisis and starts the reaction. But it does more:
it intensifies that reaction six-fold, while continuing the
primary expectation to the end of the tragedy. That is, it
causes the death not only of the king finally but of Hamlet
himself and four others first—Polonius, Ophelia, Laertes,
and the Queen. In other words, the action of the tragedy
of "Hamlet" has a crisis, a crisis-emphasis, and a crisis-
catastrophe. In all, a sort of climax. This climactic effect
is reached by keeping the crisis mental.

Nobody could deny the Senecan influence hovering around
the "Hamlet" play, even if the ghost were not present and
the author had not started at the Senecan starting-point after
the murder. Indeed, Seneca is mentioned by way of an
innuendo, in Act II, Scene 2, 419, in Polonius's comical
recommendation of the players, who can play anything.
"Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light," he adds,
after his delectable bit of introduction to a doctor's thesis on
"The Plays of Claudius's Age." (Polonius could have done
the classification thoroughly, it is evident, if he had cared
to go on.) In view of Polonius's garrulous wisdom we may
be justified in according to Shakespeare a good deal of con-
scious intelligence in matters of structure. In the French
"Hystoire" and the Saxo Grammaticus story, that lie back
of the "Hamlet" play, Hamlet "sweeps to his revenge" imme-
diately on conviction of the king's guilt. He kills the king,
burns the palace, and makes an oration to the Danes to
explain his actions, as we have already said.[1] This course

[1] In contrast with Gollancz's contention that perhaps Shake-
speare got hints for Brutus's speech to the Romans from Hamlet's
speech to the Danes, there is a curious record in North's "Plutarch";
namely, that Brutus *speaks* to the *players* he is sending to Rome to

of events would have served for a so-called typical Eliza-
bethan action.   But in Shakespeare's tragedy the crisis-deed,
the killing of the king, is withheld until the end of the play,
like a Senecan catastrophe, and gives room for much philo-
sophical talk, not heavy, but weighty.   Here then is a
Senecan play that in the best sense out-Senecas Seneca.

Whether Shakespeare found this play of "Hamlet" all
worked up to its niceties by an obscure predecessor whom
history has left in the dark like a ghost in the cellarage
unexorcised, or whether Shakespeare created the whole
action originally from Belleforest, Saxo, Seneca, "The Span-
ish Tragedy," and other popular material and devices of his
day, makes little difference to the problem of the structure
of the tragedy as it stands.   The evidence remains that it
was printed in Shakespeare's lifetime with his name on the
title page, and the final version represents his judgment.
What the play contains is there because he wanted it there.
How much better managed the scenes and motive are than
in "The Spanish Tragedy" is immediately patent.   There
we have the revenge in kind, a life for a life as here; the
feigned madness (Hieronimo) as here (Hamlet); the real
madness (Isabella) as here (Ophelia); the hesitation of the
avenger to secure proof (Hieronimo mistrusts Belimperia's
letter as Hamlet the Ghost's word); the play-within-the-play

be employed in his games.   So anxious was he that everything
should be done correctly, that "he went himself as far as Byzantium
(he was in exile) to speak to some players of comedies and musi-
cians that were there.   And he wrote unto his friends for one
Canutius, an excellent player that, whatsoever they did, they should
entreat him to play in these plays."   If Hamlet gave Brutus his
speech, Brutus might well have suggested Hamlet's instructions to
the players.

to catch the guilty—but we need not rehearse the events!
Readers know how much alike they are in enumeration,
but how exceedingly different in development and effect.
Hieronimo is more mad and less spiritual than Hamlet, and
it is evident that the author of "The Spanish Tragedy"
merely stumbled upon the hesitation idea. After Hieronimo
makes up his mind he moves forward with business-like
despatch. He advances steadily to the play-scene. He
really needed only to be confirmed in his suspicions; and
when Belimperia tells him the details of the murder he
hurries onward with his revenge. The hesitation motive is
no part of his final tragedy. The fact that the old marshal
uses the play to compass his ends is characteristic of the
palace major-domo, the presenter of masks, not the hesitator.
Shakespeare makes the hesitation and the idea of the mock
play clearly matters of character. Hamlet never can make
up his mind. He uses the play as a psychical blow. He
intends to follow it with the physical, but he does not. He
kills the king only after the king has killed him—only after
he realizes that he must act "now or never."

Shakespeare saw that it would not do to put the physical
blow early; for after it is struck the "Hamlet" drama is
done. And it is Hamlet that we are interested in. But, on
the other hand, there is the great advantage of the face-to-
face meeting of the strugglers at the middle of the action.
This is a Greek convention; it is a Senecan convention; it
had come to be Shakespeare's opportunity for some of his
finest work. It seemed like an indispensable point of struc-
ture; why forego it? The play-within-the-play offered the
essentials without the disadvantage of retiring either of the

contestants. If Hamlet really meets the king and accuses him point-blank, Hamlet must strike the blow or forfeit all respect of an Elizabethan audience. The play-within offered the solution of the problem. The crisis, to be a crisis at all, must contain the recognition by the king that Hamlet knows of the crime, and the recognition by Hamlet that the king knows that Hamlet knows. Such a recognition occurs at the end of the mock play. Moreover, all men like to see the reaction of the deed upon the doer. If Hamlet is to bait the king, Hamlet must expect reaction, and the audience wants to watch the struggle. It has a right to the conclusion. Despite the objection of critics to the incongruity of the double-action in popular Elizabethan plays, it seems to me that the Elizabethans were correct in their dramatic sense for completeness—their wanting to see the doer done, to judge the reciprocal fitness of events. That is what an audience applauds most in comedy; that is what affords the alleviating satisfaction in tragedy. Shakespeare has proved himself right for three hundred years. What Shakespeare's people wanted was more than a Senecan ghost's play. But how beautiful Shakespeare made the ghost! "Alas, poor ghost!" (I suppose that was the first time a ghost had ever been pitied.) Yet Seneca *was* too "heavy." The audience naturally wanted something done before the end of the play. With the device of the mock play appeared a chance, then, to the dramatist to have something done, to start a reaction, and yet not cut the interest in two by bringing in a new set of characters after the crisis. Even the part of Fortinbras in the catastrophe is prepared for very early.

Accordingly, the play-within-the-play not only served

Hamlet's purpose of a psychological test of the king's mind
and the ghost's honesty, but it served the dramatist's pur-
pose of a definite point toward which to direct the rising
action; in other words, it offered a crisis, and a crisis-em-
phasis with a tragic incident that would set the action
definitely toward the catastrophe—Hamlet's catastrophe. As
Goethe in "Wilhelm Meister" has said of this play, "The
hero has no plan; but the piece is full of plan."

The crisis-emphasis is especially good. It is the closet
scene of Hamlet and his mother. It is closely connected
with the rising action and with the crisis. Helped out by
the doings of the Ghost, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz,
Guildenstern, and the players, Hamlet the hesitator reached
the quasi-deed of inserting some dozen or sixteen lines into
an old tragedy to serve as a trap to catch the conscience of
the king. It caught the conscience of the king, but it also
caught Hamlet. Hamlet did not rush up at the end of the
play-scene and kill the king as he might have done; but he
said immediately afterwards that he was ready to do it.
However, when he came accidentally upon the king at
prayers, he put up his sword. With the words, "Up, sword,"
the crisis ends, and the emphasis of it begins.

We have seen that in a certain sense the crisis-emphasis
in the "Medea" is a prototype of the crisis-emphasis in
Shakespeare. Hamlet, like Medea when she had finished her
interview with Creon, possessed all the power necessary for
revenge, but must withhold his hand, he said, until he had
tested his mother. Medea must see Jason. This is in both
cases a philosophical and structural excuse. Hamlet finds
the mother as cowardly and shallow as Medea finds Jason;

but effects with her, because of his love and for the sake
of his further scheme, as Medea effected with Jason, a par-
tial reconciliation. Quarto One has a full reconciliation and
a partnership struck up between the avenger and his aunt-
mother; but Shakespeare thought better of the matter and
realized that the full justification of the catastrophe could
come only the other way. Hence he changed to the second
quarto reading.

In the conference, Hamlet recalls first conditions (an
excellent function of the crisis-emphasis point); intensi-
fies the mouse-trap scene by asserting the king's guilt (the
raison d'être of such a point of structure as this); directs
the action downward by impulsively killing Polonius (the
tragic turn); anticipates the subsequent course of events
when he says: "I must to England, you know that?" (a con-
nective device); and emphatically prophesies the catastrophe,
when he says he took Polonius for his better, and that he
would trust his school-fellows as he would adders (an ele-
ment that revives our confidence in the plot of the play and
our belief in its final solution). It may be noted—perhaps as
a coincidence—that the crisis is followed and the catastrophe-
emphasis preceded in both the "Medea"[1] and the "Hamlet"
by a soliloquy or monologue wherein the author of revenge,
while gloating over his opportunity, measures his spirit and
sets a limit to his impetuosity. Undramatic as the conven-
tion of the Senecan soliloquy is, we would hardly forego

[1] The nurse is present (a Senecan disregard of the accessory char-
acters), but it is perfectly evident from what the nurse says earlier
that Medea is talking to herself, and it is evident from Medea's
own speech that she is talking to herself: *"Si quaeris odio, misera,
quem statuas modum,"* etc.

any of Hamlet's talks to himself.   Shakespeare justifies
the device to our souls if not to our patience.   It was left
to Ibsen, in this modern more hurried and "artistic" age
to do away with the undramatic private thinking in public.
The improvement is a great gain to theater-goers but a loss
to literature.

It seems hardly necessary to review the action of "Ham-
let" for itself; but we might, by a quick reference to a play
so thoroughly known, make a convenient allusive summary
of the points of structure that we have so far seen the Eliza-
bethans conscious of, and in addition thus get our bearings
for what points remain—remain either because they have
not yet at the time of "Hamlet" been developed, or because
we as critics were compelled by the necessity of progress
and clearness of thought on larger matters to forego them
a while.   We review, then, not in the time order of the
development but in the dramatic order of use in this play.

The "Hamlet" action opens, as the "Julius Caesar" and
as the "Romeo and Juliet" open, with a keynote scene,
which raises expectation high enough to admit of a long
retrospective narrative, in which the state of affairs at Elsi-
nore is explained and Hamlet's melancholy revealed.   Scene
3 is given over to a little group of personages of somewhat
independent interest: Polonius, Laertes and Ophelia.   And
Scenes 4 and 5 introduce the exciting motive definitely: the
ghost speaks the word "Revenge," and in a frenzy Hamlet
assumes the duty and declares that he will remember nothing
else.   The introduction is complete at the end of Scene 5,
and the rise of the action begins at that place where we
feel that Hamlet has his problem and hesitates to meet it.

The ghost has come; Hamlet has pledged himself, has prepared his friends by swearing them to silence, and proposes himself as ready to act, but immediately complains of the times and of his problem.

Two months later, at the beginning of the second act, we find him with nothing done; so the rise towards the crisis proceeds through two stages: the love-mad theory and the play-scheme (Act II, Scenes 1 and 2). A difference between "Hamlet" and "The Spanish Tragedy" is their difference in the use of the play-within. Kyd compasses the catastrophe with it; Shakespeare, the crisis. This change alone would indicate that Shakespeare thought carefully about the crisis, knowing "The Spanish Tragedy" so well as he knew it. After the crisis comes the crisis-emphasis with the tragic-incident that turns the action towards a catastrophe for Hamlet as well as for the king. The enlivening of the fall of this drama is accomplished by two devices extraordinarily well employed; an appeal to the pathetic in the Ophelia episode and to the grotesque in the grave diggers' scene (Act IV, Scene 2; Act V, Scene 1). (This matter of devices and that of auxiliary characters and the exposition we have yet to take up.) The banishment of Hamlet, his reappearance in Denmark, and the duel are the three steps on toward the catastrophe, which presents the death of the Queen, Laertes, Hamlet, and, most important of all—the delayed revenge-stroke—the death of the guilty king at the hands of the hero. But before the catastrophe falls, the author inserts the incident of the final suspense, or the arrest of the catastrophe, as I like better to call it.

There is fair proof in the various editions of this play

that Shakespeare appreciated the incident of the final sus-
pense, though it is a nice point of tectonics, and a doubter
might readily argue that it comes by chance and only from
the influence of the story-source.   Not so.   Shakespeare
definitely elaborated it, and made it more intense, as we
see by the change from the First Quarto.

By the arrest of the catastrophe, or the incident of the
final suspense, in this tragedy, we mean the fact that after
the spectator has been thoroughly convinced that Hamlet
must go down before the King's and Laertes's plans to
poison him, there is a holding up of that conviction for a
few seconds.   It comes about thus: Hamlet begins to win
the duel and the poisoned rapier does not touch him; but
the audience remembers the poison for the cup.   "That will
catch him if the rapier does not!"   And just as expected!
The King stops the play when it is all on Hamlet's side
and calls for the drink.   The audience knows that one of
these stoups of wine is to be poisoned; for with an elabo-
rate speech of compliment to Hamlet, the King has said that
he is going to drop something into the wine of one cup as a
great gift to Hamlet, which Hamlet shall get when he drinks
for refreshment after the victory.   These are the words the
king used (in the 1604 quarto):

Set me the stoups of wine upon the table.
If Hamlet give the first or second hit,
Or quit in answer of the third exchange,
Let all the battlements their ordnance fire;
The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath;
And in the cup an Unice shall he throw,
Richer than that which foure successive Kinges

In Denmark's Crown have worne. Give me the cup;
And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the Cannoniere without,
The Cannons to the heavens, the heaven to the earth,
Now the King drinks to Hamlet, come, beginne.
And you the Judges beare a wary eye.

<div style="text-align: right">[Trumpets the while.]</div>

Accordingly, the king stops the fencing now and calls for the wine; for he fears that Hamlet is not going to call for it. The King says:

"Stay; give me drinke. Hamlet, this pearle is thine;
  Here's to thy health; give him the cup."

But Hamlet says—and in his reply is the arrest of the catastrophe—

> "I'll play this bout first; set it by a while.
> Come."

This is an effective point of structure. I have seen the drama acted a number of times, but I have never seen the audience fail to clap at these words. The surprise and the relief are intense. Shakespeare meant that they should be. No one who has examined the two quartos can hold a doubt about the matter of Shakespeare's studied providence here. He deliberately lengthened and strengthened the preparation for the surprise. He inserted in the second quarto all that we have quoted about the stoups of wine and the union (or the "unice," as it is spelled in the old print), and all the king's getting ready of the poison before our eyes under the pretense of the orient pearl of great value that he

is dropping into the cup for Hamlet. There is no mention
in Quarto One of the cups. All we know of the poison is
the talk between Laertes and the King in a previous scene,
the talk that we also have in the second quarto with more
elaboration and with the difference that the King suggests
both ways of poisoning. In this scene of the duel, however,
in the first draft of the play as we have it in Quarto One,
there is only the fencing, and then,—

King.—Here *Hamlet* the king doth drinke a health to thee.
Queene.—Here *Hamlet,* take my napkin, wipe thy face.
   King.—Give me the wine.
Hamlet.—Set it by, I'le have another bowt first,
         I'le drinke anone.
Queene.—Here *Hamlet,* thy mother drinkes to thee.
         (*Shee drinkes.*)
   King.—Do not drinke Gertred: O 'tis the poysned cup!

Shakespeare's expansion by heightening the surprise and
the great relief of Hamlet's refusal make the catastrophe,
when it comes, keener but withal more acceptable. We want
to see Hamlet die doing something, not carried off stark
and a victim. It is an echo of this arrest of the catastrophe
that Hamlet and Laertes in the struggle exchange rapiers;
but Hamlet is already wounded. This exchange is only a
device to end Laertes also and by his own treachery. The
multiple deaths come to us softened by Hamlet's piece of
good luck—or prescience, shall we call it? Through this
earlier surprising relief of the tension of our sensibilities
we are ready for the end of the action when it comes.

If the elaboration of Quarto Two at this point in the play
were occasioned by the fact that this drama was presented

at the entertainment given to the king and his Danish bride, the argument that Shakespeare realized that the arrest of the catastrophe is an effective point of structure, is not overthrown but is rather confirmed; for what more natural than that he should select a place in the action for his particular Danish embellishments where they would be prominent themselves and serve to enhance the climactic effect of the piece as a whole? Indeed, this seeking a good place for additions might in itself have created the realization of the value of the arrest of the catastrophe.

This point of structure is taken up here in the chapter on "Hamlet," because the evidence that Shakespeare was conscious of it by this time and used it deliberately is very strong. We find something like the arrest of the catastrophe in the "Richard III" action, where the announcement comes to Richard that Buckingham's army is dispersed by the flood and he himself has wandered away alone. But the presence of the sudden change in the expected evil may result there (Act IV, Scene 4, Lines 5-10) wholly from the chronicle, or the use there may be due to Shakespeare's interest in his protagonist's moods. Moreover, the place in the action is a little early for what I mean by the arrest of the catastrophe. The tension hardly justifies the insertion of relief at a place more than a whole act before the fall of the catastrophe. Anxiety is just beginning in earnest; Richard is yet to send Buckingham to the block. The facile and interesting touch of having Richard strike the messenger and then "cure" the blow with the present of a purse is characteristic of a tyrant, and amuses rather than relieves—especially where there is scarcely any feeling to

relieve. We have not seen Richmond. This incident, then, of the third messenger could be interpreted as a sketch of personality and as a connecting incident; for it reveals that Buckingham is helpless—news that prepares us for the next messenger but one who announces that Buckingham is taken, and for the following scene (Act V, Scene 1) that presents Buckingham on the way to execution conducted by Richard's sheriff. Then, too, the incident is one of a number of "Enter-messengers," and may be but a varied part to help make up the whole of a bustling court scene on the eve of a war.

Freytag mentions the next messenger's report, that Richmond has sailed for Brittany, as the force of the final suspense. It *is* a suspense; but it is hardly emphasized enough to be clearly a functional point in the play. Moreover, I am not sure that Shakespeare was conscious of the advantages beyond those that we have noticed for the Buckingham episode. However, Freytag may be right. The incidents are certainly the kind of material that could be used for such points. I have held over the discussion of the arrest of the catastrophe, however, on purpose, to the place in Shakespeare's development ("Hamlet," Q. 2), where evidence is strong enough to make us sure that the dramatist and not the original narrative only was responsible. Freytag might better have said, perhaps, that we have there in "Richard III" an incident that could have been used appropriately later in the action as a force of the final suspense. But we see that it is far from the end—four hundred and fifty-four lines away, with six other scenes following. In "Hamlet" what I have described as the arrest of the catas-

trophe occurs only one hundred and twenty lines from the
end; and in "Othello" the same point occurs one hundred
and thirty-one lines from the end.

I do not agree with Freytag, either, in his certainty of
the use of the device in "Romeo and Juliet." Freytag calls
the going of the Friar to the tomb the arrest of the catas-
trophe. It may be; but the action is not a surprise. It
is in direct line with the story of the play and with what has
gone before dramatically. This last fact must be true, of
course, of any arrest of the catastrophe; namely, that it
be not unduly abrupt or discordant with what precedes: it
must come as a surprise yet come naturally. But what I
wish to say here is that since the action of Friar Laurence
is expected by us if Romeo fails, inasmuch as the friar is
Romeo's confidant, we are not surprised to see him start on
his way, however glad we may be to have him go. The
next scene, rather, comes nearer to being what I mean.
Paris's arrival is a surprise, and, against our previous con-
viction, we really hope that he will interfere with Romeo
to the effect of delaying him from his purpose of suicide
until Juliet awakes. But Romeo kills Paris and the turn
downward is made more sharp. However, I am not sure
that Shakespeare was not here merely indulging in the gen-
eral Elizabethan convention of killing off all the principals
on both sides. What I understand by the final arrest of the
catastrophe as a point of structure as Shakespeare uses it
is this: it is an incident (in the root sense of the word as a
"cutting into" or "across" the falling action), inserted near
the end of the play to give *a brief, unexpected but welcomed
respite, serving for a momentary relief, but finally futile to
hold up the catastrophe,* which falls thereafter with aug-

mented force. There is no doubt about Shakespeare's use of this effective artifice in his finest dramas. After the 1604-Quarto of "Hamlet," the arrest of the catastrophe is plain as a point of structure in tragedy.

We have, then, in "Hamlet" as an advance on "Julius Caesar" the conquering of the crisis—the making of it mental and a true continuer of the action since it does not complete the rise but prolongs it, by presenting instead of the material blow something far more characteristic of the hero under the circumstances than the material blow would have been. We have also an excellent example of the arrest of the catastrophe, a point of structure evidently thought over and worked out with care. These changes in structure help to make the action more climactic.

But "Hamlet," though the dramatist's hope was doubtless that it would not, does drag to a considerable extent in the fourth act. The return of the king upon Hamlet is so patent that, though Hamlet has still his work to do, the spectator almost feels that it is done, and that he is watching the king's play. Shakespeare's structure problem after the second quarto of "Hamlet," then, was to maintain the tragic struggle but avoid a change of dominance. In "Hamlet" the revenge motive had become practically double, though it at first promised a single construction line. With the hesitator motive joining the revenge motive, the crisis became mental but thereby the play became extended, both on account of the delay of the revenge-stroke and the opportunity for philosophizing.

Shakespeare's use of the Senecan retrospective narrative here is not much happier than its prototype. Hamlet's re-

counting of his adventures on being shipped to England, while it attains a sort of unity, is still somewhat similar to Theseus's report of the nether regions while Hercules is murdering Lycus; for, though we are interested to know about the journey in both cases, we hardly feel patient enough in the midst of impending tragic events to listen to a mere recital. Shakespeare's changing of the Queen's part occasioned his putting this retrospective narrative into Hamlet's mouth rather than Horatio's as before. Shakespeare inserts accordingly, also earlier in the piece, the direct letter of Hamlet to the King. This serves as a second after-echo of the crisis. In the way of frightening Claudius, Hamlet writes: "Tomorrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes."

As we noticed earlier, Shakespeare appeals to episode in addition to retrospective narrative to help him out in this fourth act. He was not altogether free, I imagine, to do what he pleased with the source. Perhaps the story was too well known to be changed greatly; maybe the old play was fairly well fixed in public consciousness, or even in the repertoire of Shakespeare's company. Shakespeare's chief additions in the second quarto may have been, as some one has asserted, for the most part trenchant philosophy. Yet it is no small matter structurally to have worked out the incident of the arrest-of-the-catastrophe and to have set forth definitely as an architectonic ideal a mental crisis for the middle of a tragedy.

Chapter VIII

Unity, the Exciting-Force, and the Exposition

Shakespeare seemed surely in 1604 well equipped as a tragic dramatist. He had concepts of a catastrophe, a protagonist and antagonist at struggle, a keynote scene, a rise to a well-defined mental crisis, a crisis-emphasis including a tragic incident, the arrest of the catastrophe, and, over all and with all, as sovereign, an inimitable power of character-revelation. Yet there was at least one attainment he lacked and was conscious of needing, to wit: structural unity, or, as he thought of it, probably, command over the interim between the crisis-emphasis group of scenes and the catastrophe group, the fourth act of our modern texts. It would hardly be fair to Shakespeare's intelligence, we remind ourselves again, to imagine that he did not feel that his earlier tragedies were somewhat epic in form and his later ones double. Despite his masterful use of episode, his fourth acts in "Julius Caesar" and "Hamlet" are comparative failures.

What did he do that resulted in strengthening this weak place? He reconsidered his structural motive. He shortened one-half of his "typical" action and very much lengthened the other. He chose a story that allowed him to arrange a Senecan (or Greek) pair of strugglers, Othello and Desdemona; and a Senecan (or Greek) pair of de-

baters; one, the holder of the title-rôle, pushed to his doom; the other, the causer of the action, representing malignant fate and personal meanness (Othello and Iago). I have recorded in a previous chapter that I think that Shakespeare became interested in the Senecan pair of debaters in his study of Brutus and Cassius, but that he could not stop then to develop all the dramatic possibilities since his crisis was set before him and his path prepared by history. In "Othello" we have the Cassius-Brutus action free with Cassius changed into Iago and Brutus into Othello, and Caesar, Desdemona. Mark, I do not mean that the characters are the same. Of course, Desdemona is not Caesar in any way but as the victim; and Iago is not Cassius except that he works Othello's will up to the murder somewhat as Cassius works Brutus's.[1] It was perhaps Shakespeare's own Brutus who suggested the swift close of the "Othello" action: he said that when Caesar was dead, all that one who loved Caesar could do was to die with Caesar. Just so Othello dies. There is no need of an outside reaction and another play. Othello himself brings the tragedy to a close. This ending is different from the story source. There Othello denies his deed, is apprehended, and banished.

But the implication was made also in a previous chapter that it is the second half of the so-called typical Elizabethan action that is Senecan-like. It is, in the sense that that is the half which includes the catastrophe. Either half would be Senecan if it were only considered as a whole play and not a half. The *two* halves are what is called Elizabethan,

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[1] Iago practices also on Roderigo and not unfrequently takes our ears with a sharp reminiscence of Cassius; for instance, " 'Tis in our selves that we are thus or thus."

or "Shakespearean," or "Brutus-Antonian," or anything that
will connote the doubleness.   We are to deal most in
"Othello" not with the Brutus-Antony situation, but with
the Brutus-Cassius, which ends with the murder and the
emphasis of it.   Emilia bears the part of Antony in this
action.   She brings the world in on the Moor to judge
his deed.   But there is no long "Emilia" *play* to follow;
for the Moor judges himself and there is little need of
Emilia and the world.   If Brutus had slain himself when
the citizens ran to his house, the action outlines of these
two dramas would be analogous.   Not identical, naturally;
for the Othello drama with all its general simplicity is more
complex in particulars and obviously much longer than the
rising action of the "Julius Caesar."   The connotation I
wish to suggest here is merely that the "Othello" is a rising
action, and stops at the highest point.   Of the Julius Caesar
play, we called the Mark-Antony speech and the citizen's
pulling up of the benches the crisis-emphasis.   It is also the
highest point, though it is not the end of the presented
action.   In "Hamlet" we saw the climactic effect of holding
the crisis-deed for the end of the play.   In "Othello" we get
a real climax.   The action is a ladder that does not break
in two in the middle, and that has no steps leading down on
the other side.   It is a simple, straight ladder that seems
to run "up" or "down" according to your point of view.

If you think of Othello as at the height of his prosperity
and happiness at the beginning of the play, you think of him
as descending step by step to his doom.   If you think of
him as inactive at the beginning, you think of him as rising
to the most vehement expression of his passionate nature

at the end of the play. If you think of Iago as the causer of events, you think of him as rising step by step in his intellectual control of the Moor to the very top rung of success. If you think of him as a human being given over to the vices of the intellect, you see him descending in the morality of that intellect step by step as he pushes the ingenuous creature he is controlling down the ladder from noble deeds to base ones. The descent of Iago himself, however, is really not like that of Othello from light into darkness, but is from darkness into blackness. At the beginning Iago is able to set men wrong by ingenious suggestion, but before he has finished the action he there begins, he descends to the use of insinuation and barefaced lies, the immorality of weaklings. At the close of the play he goes forth alive but doomed to death. We will think of the action as rising.

I do not wish to be understood as saying that the "Othello" is in any sense classical or Senecan except in some parts of the skeleton of the action and in the situation of the contestants. There is something peculiar here. The play is an Italian romantic Elizabethan production. It is Elizabethan in the mere fact that the exposition begins far forward from the crisis. The author has a retrospective story to tell, but he sets it forth in "acting" scenes, at the same time revealing the personality of his characters. He changes them a great deal from their prototypes in the *novella*. There Iago is in love with Desdemona, and Cassio's disgrace is consequent upon his own deed unplanned by the ensign.

The rise to the middle scenes is made through two stages:

the Cassio-Roderigo quarrel; and the handkerchief acci-
dent, in which fate tragically reinforces the schemer. Act
III opens with two little preparatory scenes: one, Cassio
seeking word with Desdemona; the other, Othello making
ready to walk on the ramparts, whence he shall come in
time to see Cassio leave. With Cassio's leaving begins
Iago's direct work on Othello's mind. And what a scene
follows! The keener intellect and baser soul turns the
weaker intellect and nobler soul upside down and wrong
side out. Insinuations and echoes raise doubt; specious
philosophy and cunning suggestion strengthen it; and a
bold lie, fatally backed by an accident, establishes it, until
at the end of the struggle the victim says:

> "Look here, Iago,
> All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven:
> 'Tis gone!
> Arise, black vengeance, from thy hollow cell!
> Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne
> To tyrannous hate! Swell, bosom, with thy
>   fraught,
> For 'tis of aspics' tongues!"
>
> (Act III, Scene 3, l. 442)

From this point on, Iago has only to direct the powerful
creature that he has aroused. His hold on Othello is fixed.
The Moor goes out to demand the handkerchief, to strike
the woman, to do the murder. But it is Iago who directs
the action; it is he who says, "Strangle her in her bed." The
action is therefore still rising.

For his third act, Shakespeare got from the source the
villain's tricks of persuasion—his seeming to deny what he

asserts, and his apparent desire to withhold information that he ought to give. Likewise the author got the handkerchief incident, and Desdemona's advocacy of Cassio; but he changed Iago's personality, making him a colder, more disinterested, and intellectual villain. Shakespeare changed, too, the particulars of the theft, making Desdemona's first losing of the handkerchief an accident—a simple yet extremely forcible use of fate—a happier use than the *novella* makes when it has Cassio, coming to Desdemona's back door to deliver the handkerchief that Iago has stolen, run plump into Othello and then, through timidity and sudden caution, turn and flee in a compromising manner. The transference of the fate element from the one to the other incident seems the stroke of genius that helps create plot unity. However, since in the *novella* the ensign steals the handkerchief while he decoys the victim with his own little daughter, Shakespeare's reluctance to touch the episode, though it is very dramatic, may result, as some one has suggested, from an innate reverence for childhood, and not mainly from the plan of the action of the drama. It is noteworthy, however, that the change detracts from the concreteness of Iago, makes him less a person by not being a father.

But whatever the explanation, the fact is before us: After the beginning of the rise, the action moves forward in a straight line to the catastrophe. Iago announces his course and pursues it to the end without opposition. It is startling to notice that he declares his motive to be revenge, though nobody believes him, not even Emilia, who echoes his declaration later in the play; and he does not believe himself,

for he acknowledges that, had he not the pretended motive
of revenge, he would yet pursue his course. What does this
declaration signify? Is it anything besides an effective
stroke in a superb delineation of a villain?

What does this indefiniteness of motive *within* Iago mean?
Can it be the revelation of a new plan of structure on
the part of the dramatist? Can it mean that Iago has no
motives, but is himself a motive?

The debate between Iago and Othello keeps the middle
scenes of the play mental and prolonged, and keeps the ac-
tion constantly rising. We must inquire specifically into
the technic here. Many critics have asserted its superiority,
but none that I know of has explained it. Professor George
P. Baker has gone so far as to say that in this play there
is a "fourth act perfect for all time"; but he does not tell
us how it happens to make the effect; he does not analyze.
Perhaps it would be better to say, he does not show us how
the structure is pre-arranged to make this effect. I wonder
whether or not a demonstration is possible?

Some one might say that the sense of unity comes because
the dramatist does not introduce new important characters
after the crisis. But will this restraint completely account
for the effect? The dramatist does not introduce impor-
tant characters, but he introduces new ones—almost as
many as in "Hamlet." In "Othello" they are Bianca,
Gratiano, Lodovico, and "officers." The clown seems new,
but he has been in before. In "Hamlet" the new characters
are not important, either. They are the grave-diggers, the
priests, "gentlemen," Osric, Fortinbras, and Soldiers. For-
tinbras comes nearest to being important; but he has been

well prepared for, both by mention and by anticipation of what he does. He hardly seems new. Yet in "Hamlet" we feel the double action.

Another might say that the sense of unity is present because dominance does not change sides; that Iago is the protagonist and continues so to the end of the play; whereas in "Hamlet" after the crisis Claudius really takes up the action and becomes the protagonist. But the answer is, that in a very large measure Othello is the chief agent in the second half of the "Othello" action. Of course, as I have tried to make plain elsewhere, there is not in the same way as in "Hamlet" and in "Julius Caesar" a second half of the "Othello" tragedy; but, nevertheless, after all is said about Iago's being the protagonist, and there being no change of actors, we notice that it is Othello's and not Iago's hands that do the choking, and it is Othello's and not Iago's dagger that takes the life of the Moor.

Iago unmistakably plays a different part from that of any of Shakespeare's previous characters. He is most like Richard III, but even a child can see that Iago is a much finer study than Richard. Iago is a palpable villain, but there is something elusive about him. He is more unhuman than Richard. Richard is in no small part a devil and inhuman, but he is also in no small part a man and a personage. Iago is more of *a thought and a tendency*. I offer this statement as a solution of the dilemma that gives occasion to two opinions of critics: one maintaining that Iago is the protagonist; one, that Othello is. They both are! Othello is the body and Iago is the mind. Brutus and Hamlet do their own thinking: but Othello does not do his.

Iago does it for him. Brutus and Hamlet have each a starter from outside, but their thoughts are their own. Othello's are never for one moment his own after Iago insinuates himself into Othello's nature. Iago is a visible phenomenon of tyrannous hate: he is as light, as agile, but as persistent as a thought. In the intense scene where Othello completely admits Iago, just as a person sometimes completely admits a hovering and persistent idea, Othello expresses at once his own surrender and Iago's nature:

> "Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne
>   To tyrannous hate. Swell, bosom, with thy fraught,
> For 'tis of aspics' tongues!"

Iago is not slow to "get within," so to speak. He realizes his sovereignty, and also, like a malicious thought, he tries to make Othello believe that Othello is master. When Othello kneels to register his vow,[1] Iago kneels in accompaniment, and the two are indissolubly joined. Iago says:

> "Do not rise yet.
>   Witness, you ever-burning lights above,
>   You elements that clip us round about,
>   Witness that here Iago doth give up
>   The execution of his wit, hands, heart,
>   To wrong'd Othello's service! Let him
>   command,
>   And to obey shall be in me remorse,
>   What bloody business ever."

[1] A kneeling and vow were not new dramatic business. Edward II kneels and vows vengeance on the nobles for Gaveston's death. Tancred kneels and vows to punish Gismunda. Tancred's situation is not totally unlike Othello's, but Tancred is correct in his suspicions and Othello is not.

Now, Iago has no intention of doing the "bloody business" himself. He means to lend only the first of his enumerated proffers—his wit! Othello must be the hands and the feet. If not the feet, then the other "gull" must be the feet. If Othello will not descend so low as to be the feet for this pernicious intellect, then Roderigo must run here and there to do the mischief. Iago is not so much concerned with getting bloody deeds executed, however, as in getting control of the Moor. The next speech takes Iago a little by surprise, perhaps, but he answers:

> "My friend is dead; 'tis done at your request.
>   But let her live."

That *her!* Could anything be more like a persistently recurring thought than Iago's method of attack? The Puritan who got the law passed against swearing in plays, if he ever once became interested in the action of this tragedy, would hardly cavil at Othello's strong language at this point, I think. As Othello says elsewhere, he surely would gladly have forgot her just now. But it is part of Iago's plan that Othello shall never forget, and never lack a directing thought. As a baleful intellect Iago is seated sure between Othello's shoulders. Othello says naïvely,

> "Now art thou my lieutenant."

Iago replies promptly,

> "I am your own forever."

We need hardly discuss, therefore, these two persons as the protagonist and the antagonist of the play; but rather

as protagonist and *inciting motive*. After the entrance of that motive into Othello's mind the two are one. Desdemona becomes the antagonist, the sufferer, in this drama of maliciousness and fate.

This is the first of Shakespeare's tragedies where the inciting motive of the action is indisputably personified in a human being. We saw a near approach to the idea in the relationship of Brutus and Cassius; but Cassius was an historical personage and Brutus is represented as being already susceptible to the idea of the tyrant's being killed. Cassius had but to persuade Brutus that Brutus was to lead. But here, Iago has not only to suggest method but to *be* the thought that works in the mind of the executor of the action. The ghost was the exciting force in Hamlet's play; but it was more of a convention than Iago is. The ghost's presence was effective as spectacle and served as an opportunity for philosophy and poetry, and was somewhat more concrete than Hamlet's flitting thought, but it was not intimately connected as cause with every presented event of the play. But Iago is: he is the personization (if I may coin the word) of the inciting motive. Take your text and look carefully through it and you will find that there is not a single scene in which he is not the prime mover or the malicious participator. He actually appears in every scene as our modern texts are divided, every scene except two—that of the proclamation, which consists solely of the message (13 lines) and that of Desdemona's willow song. Of this last he is unmistakably the cause.

Iago was something new in tragedy in 1604. How potent he was for structure we see! There can be no mistake

about his use in this drama. He holds the parts together as effectively as the law of gravitation keeps one of our mighty buildings intact. From the bottom to the top he is present. And again, like the law of gravitation, he is more of a principle than a fact, and more of a man's thought than a man. Critics have repeatedly complained that Iago is at once human and not human. His humanity and his non-humanity are at this date Shakespeare's especial achievement: Iago's non-humanity is the underlying structure of the piece, while his humanity is Shakespeare's triumph over his own technic.

"Othello" is not the last tragedy in which Shakespeare made use of a personated element of structure, although Iago is his supreme example. We recognize Goneril, Regan and Edmund as filial ingratitude active—surely they are not altogether human beings. Lady Macbeth is the personal inciting-force of Macbeth's actions as the witches are the symbolic. But by the time the poet comes to writing "Lear," "Macbeth" and "Antony and Cleopatra," he is deeply engrossed with other matters besides pure structure and even besides characterization.

Obviously, one could not mean that Iago is no more than an abstraction, nor even that he is no more than an objectification of a thought. He is very convincing in the action. It is only when we reflect on him that we see his artificial make-up. That other dramatists saw the advantage of him is proved by the fact that he reappeared again and again in later tragedy. He is on the stage today in melodrama. And what makes such otherwise poor plays so generally acceptable is the simplicity of the construction

line. Nobody has to sit and wonder why a certain scene is brought on or what it means.

Shakespeare won the unity of "Othello" not by an emphasized protagonist, as Tamburlaine and Richard the Third each is, but by an emphasized structural cause for the events. The revenge motive is all but lost in "Hamlet" more than once, as the ghost reminds the hero. It practically is lost with the ghost's last appearance; for the hesitator motive wins at the crisis. The ascent is made easily enough with the thought of killing the king, but the descent with the thought of killing Hamlet is not so easy; for there is no material justification for Claudius. The constructive line of the scenes, then, must be spliced with another length and a slight knot—the Laertes revenge motive. It is of great advantage structurally, though, that Claudius tells us what he means Laertes to do. We are more engaged than we otherwise should be with the events. The catastrophe is well managed. But the scenes in the fourth act come more by chance, and, beautiful as are those presenting Ophelia, do not quite satisfy dramatically. They leave a sense of disjointedness, the epic feeling of "and," "and," not of "therefore."

At only three places in the succession of scenes in "Othello" do we lack the feeling of "thereforeness" immediately, the feeling that Iago has caused the action; these three places are (1) the landing at Cyprus, (2) the herald's proclamation of thirteen lines of Othello's permission to the garrison to enjoy his wedding celebration, (3) the tiny connecting scene of six lines where Othello goes to walk on the ramparts. A word about these exceptions. The first

one is evidently momentous. But since Iago has just told us that he intends to make the Moor jealous and to "have Michael Cassio on the hip," we are wide-awake to every movement of Cassio, Desdemona, Othello, or Iago. Before the scene is finished, we see, directed by Iago's announcement, the "little web with which he will ensnare as great a fly as Cassio." From there on every scene represented (except the two connecting ones I have mentioned) is not only interpreted by Iago, but caused by him—even every incident but the two that are of fate and chance: the dropping of the handkerchief and the appearance at the right time of Bianca. Of these the spectator is sure nobody can make more diabolical use than Iago. Iago snatches the handkerchief from Emilia as his own crisis-deed. But structurally, though it is important, it is only a step in the rising action. This surely includes the scene which follows, the interview as a result of which Iago becomes firmly seated in Othello's mind as its directing force.

Now it is pertinent to ask, what is this scene structurally? What is its nature and function? It might technically be called "the entrance-of-the-exciting-force," that point in the structure where it is evident that the protagonist has his problem clearly before him and is wrought up to direct coming events. Granted that Iago is the inciting cause and Othello the protagonist, then this middle scene of the play becomes truly a mental crisis for Othello. But though it is a critical test of Othello, it is in no sense a turning point of the action; though it is one of the middle scenes of the play, it is not the end of the rise and the beginning of the reaction. The murder of Desdemona is that. The mental crisis

here in the middle of the play is not a turning point of the structure. Shakespeare was seeking to avoid that ill result, and he brought out strongly in consequence this excellent aid to effective action, namely, a definite marking of the entrance of the exciting force.

This excellence is one thing that is lacking in the "Julius Caesar" drama. The point where Brutus makes up his mind is not shown. There are the hints of Cassius and the ambiguous replies of Brutus, but we do not witness the mental struggle. That is hidden behind the scenes. "What you would work me to I have some aim," says Brutus. But his next announcement is, "It must be by his death," showing that Brutus has already made up his mind to help in the assassination. What he gives us in the soliloquy is his reasons for this decision. We have missed the tragic struggle. Portia narrates it in retrospect when the consequences are already in operation—"yesternight at supper," etc. In "Othello" the struggle is presented directly.

This struggle is a full psychic crisis such as was not attained in "Hamlet." Hamlet's play-scene is a substitution for the crisis-deed, and is a full structural crisis for the action of the piece; but it is only partly a crisis of mind for Hamlet the protagonist, since Hamlet has already accepted his duty before the play-scene. It is more of a psychic crisis for the antagonist. The mock play is a functional crisis in the structure, since although a substitution for the expected material deed, it helps form a turning point in the action. Othello's vow is not a substitution for any expected material deed, but is really a crisis of mind for Othello. Instead of being a turning point in the course of the terrific

events, it is rather the definite beginning of those events. Everything previous has been a rise to this scene, the coming into Othello's mind of the thought. Everything from now on is the working out of that thought into a terrible deed, is a continued rise. There is to be no exchange of interests: there is here in this scene a consolidation of them—Iago and Othello from now on work together to bring about the subsequent events.

The handkerchief scene between Othello and Desdemona is the reinforcing emphasis of the scene of the entrance of the exciting thought. It follows immediately and is a veritable repetition and confirmation of the harrowing mental crisis just past. This emphasis scene contains the *mot de situation,* which is truly tragic. "The handkerchief! the handkerchief! the handkerchief!" We have seen the accident of the losing of it; we have seen Iago snatch it from his wife's hand; we have heard him lie most boldly about it to the Moor; we have a clear recollection of the Moor's last speech:

> "I will withdraw
> To furnish me with some swift means of death
> For the fair devil."

A second before he entered, we saw the gentle lady not a little disturbed because she could not find the handkerchief. And now she is much frightened with the reiteration and the passionate narrative of her lord concerning its charms. She is grieved, she is startled, she loves her husband, and does not want him to be vexed. He has made her apprehensive. Consequently, she asserts what she is not sure is the truth, but what she *hopes* is the truth!

"I say it is not lost," she falters. This speech is the tragic incident for Desdemona. The giving of the tragic incident to the antagonist is a Senecan convention. With it, Desdemona becomes part agent of her catastrophe. She seemingly incriminates herself by her further advocation of Cassio. If she had been less persistent in her pleading, or less stubborn in her silence, all might have been well. She could have called Emilia in and questioned her again, and the three together might have arrived at the truth about the machinations. With her worldly and suspicious wit, Emilia doubtless would have seen through the Moor's state of mind and have realized the great importance of the handkerchief. With her love to Desdemona as strong as it proved to be, Emilia might have confessed as she confessed later. But Shakespeare is right again. This is a play in which trifles light as air may be made important. When we think of Iago's consummate skill and Othello's intenseness, we realize that the present scene is more natural and at the same time more tragic than a rational one would be, though the catastrophe seems to result from an accident and a fib. It does not so result fundamentally, we have seen. Everything results from Iago. Shakespeare touches the tragic element there is in stubbornness and equivocation with just the right emphasis here. In the next drama a larger treatment makes somewhat the same situation painfully unconvincing.

But in "Othello" things are dramatically correct if you admit the personified exciting-force. Events must go just so with a starter and interpreter always at hand. Iago acts on the course of the drama precisely like a precon-

ceived notion in a man's affairs. There is no possibility
of an understanding between Othello and Desdemona so
long as Iago is about. He comes upon the interview just
closed with the same cutting insistence as an unwelcome
thought: "There is no other way," he says, as he pushes
Cassio into Desdemona's presence. That Cassio should do
with the handkerchief just what best concerns Iago's pur-
pose seems no stranger in this play than in life, where
fateful coincidences once in a while occur. The happening
is over quickly, and what the dramatist means to do with
it is running full tilt before we have time to question. We
know that if Iago does not win one way he will another.
It is the winning that we are anxious about, not the method.
He rises steadily, we say, to the top rung of success.
Othello can not free himself for a minute from this clinging
obsession, this incorporate, diabolical jealousy and malicious-
ness. Othello can regain his own personality only after
carrying into effect Iago's wish.

The murder of Desdemona is what would have been the
crisis-deed in a typical Elizabethan pre-Hamlet tragedy. It
is easy to see what Shakespeare's practice with the hesi-
tator motive taught him, and how much more truly a climax
the play of "Othello" is than the play of "Hamlet."

In the story, Othello does Iago's bidding and then denies
the deed. Shakespeare and his Elizabethan audience knew
better how to end a tragedy. We dare to align ourselves
with them against the critics and say, it is more dramatically
entertaining, more wholesome, to see the reaction than to
be left to guess it. The people who ride in the subway to
the playhouse and sit in the gallery at the performance may

well complain to some of our modern theorists whose
dramas lead nowhere, "Came we for *this* from depths of
underground?" Shakespeare knew his audience, we have
said, and he knew the long established favorite scene. He
gave it. There is no jog, no breaking of the play in two.
The machinations of Iago are a long structural rise to a
climax made up of the death of Desdemona and a quick
reaction including the death of Othello. The destruction
of the Moor is Iago's reason for being in this play. The
whole unified action is the working of his nature out into
deeds in the lives of others. And his nature is that of a
malicious thought. The end is inevitable dramatically, what-
ever it might be in the story. Emilia is just true enough,
intense enough, and brief enough in her life, poor girl, to
serve for the occasion of the reaction. She is not the cause
of Othello's death. Iago is the cause. Othello himself
is the agent. O the pity of it, Iago! the pity of it! For he
was great of heart.

So far as conquering the effect of doubleness depends on
the proportion of the number of lines in the first to the
number of lines in the second part of a typical Shakespearean
action, "Hamlet" is an advance on "Julius Caesar," and
"Othello" may be said to be a complete success. Develop-
ment of the inciting-motive very much lengthened the rise,
and in "Othello" practically made the whole play a rise.
But there is in this matter of the development of the first
half of the action a more primal reason for the effect of
unity than either strength or length of the rise; namely,
excellent introduction.

Now, the first part of the rise of the "Othello" action

consists in Iago's confidences with Othello and his gradually
getting control of Othello's thoughts. The introduction to
that action must consist, then, of a characterization of Iago
and also of retrospective narrative enough to make the
situation clear. Such is exactly what we get in the first act.
And it was not in the source of the play. It is Shake-
speare's work. One can hardly imagine a dramatist writing
this first act who had not clearly in mind what he meant
Iago to do and to be.

  Shakespeare made up the whole introduction. He could
easily enough, if he had not been engrossed with the prob-
lems of Iago, have given his attention, as he did in "Romeo
and Juliet" to writing out and prefixing the courtship of
the lovers. But his expansion beyond the story took the
form of an exposition of Iago's nature; and, as I have said
earlier, it is noteworthy that Shakespeare's additions and
omissions tended to detract from the concreteness and hu-
manity of Iago, but to increase his incisive intellectual na-
ture and directive force. Iago is clearly brought out in the
introduction as inimical to everybody and as the power
that shall control the coming action. He is both confidant
and motive. "If I were the Moor, I would not be Iago," he
confesses to Roderigo; and "I am not what I am," he tells
the audience. That "Knavery's plain face is never seen till
used" we realize fully only after we have watched Iago
direct the tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice. And
how terrific the relationship of confidant can be we realize
only after Shakespeare has remade the Senecan convention.

  We know that Shakespeare studied Senecan matters again
in the motiving of the "Hamlet" action. Here in "Othello"

he is interested in the Brutus-Cassius situation from the point of view of the mutual relation of the confidants. Iago, we see, is presented as the confidant of the Moor and Emilia as the confidant of Desdemona. It is obvious that we have here in this new and virile form a relationship of the old plays made really dramatic. As we think about it we realize that the Senecan confidants are to their principals only as wishes and purposes set upon legs. They go hither and thither to do a bidding or they stand still to listen to a monologue. By them the dramatist reveals the thoughts and the struggles of his heroes with fate.

In the first line of "Othello" we hear that Iago "knew of this"; in other words, is Othello's confidant. Iago denies that he knew, but his very position as informer to Roderigo reveals the fact, and we realize later that he is Othello's confidant. In Scene 2, indeed, he is directly presented as such. We find out likewise through Iago's first conversation that he is curiously bad—bad intellectually. Now, the Senecan confidants are always good, in the matter of faithfulness at least. But what if one should not be faithful, and instead of standing and listening to all the communications about motives and about the action to which the principal is making up his mind, should turn around and furnish the motives—should, as it were, *be* the evil motive that pushes the superior on to works of death? Would not that relationship be tragic and afford a very simple and plain construction line? The ghost was Hamlet's evil fate, in a way, forcing him out of his own proper personality into that of a schemer and an assassin. But the personality of Hamlet overtopped that of the ghost and the structure broke down. Iago, how-

ever, never leaves his sphere and the action never breaks down. His opportunity to be always on the scene comes from his position as confidant; and the fact that he is more or less incorporeal likewise comes from his position as confidant. How much more virile and dramatic and tragic Iago is than the old Senecan weaklings is measured by how much more virile and dramatic he is as a thought. He is much better than Friar Laurence, though Friar Laurence is more active and Elizabethan than previous Senecan creatures. Emilia, too, is—an Elizabethan nurse, I was going to say—is a Senecan convention made new and intense, though she is not so new and strange and fascinating as Iago. What Shakespeare could do with Senecan conventions is no more clearly shown in the tragedy of "Hamlet" than in the tragedy of "Othello." Iago, the Moor's ancient, his confidant, his evil thought, the motive-force of his actions, his tragedy! But one asks, Was not Iago in the *novella?* Yes and no. An ensign was there who was in love with "Disdemona." The Ensign, despairing of corrupting the virtuous lady, abused her to the Moor and lied about a Captain, whom she had favored because the Moor liked him. But in the story it is the Moor who really seeks Iago after the first suspicion and gives him occasion for his fabrications. Then, also, the Moor is less noble in the story and much freer from the company of the Ensign, and Emilia does not at all live with "Disdemona." She lives at home, where "Disdemona" visits her occasionally. The Senecan relationship of the confidants was arranged by Shakespeare. It was carefully prepared in the first act.

We have said that the exposition is Elizabethan in the

activity of the scenes. It is Senecan, obviously, in having
the content of those scenes retrospective chiefly, rather
than forward-moving. There is an attempt to set a dra-
matic time and keep near it. Before the development
revealed in "Othello," Shakespeare would likely enough
have disregarded the time element altogether, or practically
altogether; but here, it is obvious, he is attempting some-
what of a unity of time as well as aiming directly at a unity
of action. But Shakespeare is no less the popular play-
wright because he is aiming at niceties of structure. There
is a deal of lively stage business thrown in to make the long
speeches acceptable; for there *are* long speeches, we must
admit. The play opens with a night-scene, again, as "Ham-
let" opens. The pitch here, of course, is sensibly higher,
and the movement and tone different. Enter *Brabantio in
his night-gown* is more like *Enter Hieronimo in his shirt.*
Kyd's scene Shakespeare had smiled at in his "Go by,
Jeronimy, go to thy cold bed and warm thee"; but he used
it here very appropriately to enliven the slow process of
imparting information about the past. Brabantio recalls
Old Capulet in his personality and Shylock in his situation,
at least, so far as the loss of a daughter. It may be only
Iago's words, however, that recall Shylock to us:

"Awake! What, ho! Brabantio! thieves! thieves! thieves!
Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags!"

So in the meeting of the Senate, the running in and out
of the messengers enlivens the scene. The spectator must
be got ready for the Cyprus situation and must hear in the
meantime Othello's long account of the courtship. Iago

comes in also with Desdemona and, after matters are settled, receives the sacred charge of bringing her to her lord at Cyprus. In the commission he is called "Honest Iago"— a fine bit of irony well understood after his previous speeches. At the end of the act he makes announcement of his future course—"to abuse Othello's ear." With the landing at Cyprus begins the steady unbroken rise to the end of the play.

The exposition has served as an exposition to bring out in characteristic speech and action all the important personages. Even the subplot is well under way at the opening of Act II—if we may speak of Roderigo's part as a subplot. In a drama where such a character is used so nicely in the action later he should be called an auxiliary, perhaps, rather than part of a subplot. Iago is a pernicious intellect that means to *do* nothing himself but only like a thought to set others to doing, needs some such lumpish clay to inhabit also and set in motion for variety of plot. Othello and Roderigo are both gulls to Iago's intellect, but they are very different. The chief use of Roderigo is to show forth Iago's nature before it enters into control of Othello's mind. It must seem to be very honest or it can not gain admittance there, yet the audience must know its diabolical possibilities beforehand or there will be no tragic suspense. How admirably Shakespeare has succeeded with his exposition is shown by the unmistakable rise of the succeeding action.

This point of structure is discussed at this place and not earlier because I can not be sure that before the writing of "Othello" any dramatist felt the introduction, or exposition, as a peculiar problem. We know that the early popular

dramatists just "began" with the story. Their idea was to set up a narrative in presentable scenes, and only gradually did they arrive at a consciousness of the structural function of the various parts of the action. "The Spanish Tragedy," we have seen, introduces one play, and gives us finally another. "Tamburlaine" runs along in epic structure. The beginning is good in the sense that the audience immediately feels the power of the protagonist, but there is no introduction to a whole complete dramatic action, and the speeches are long and oratorical. Tamburlaine's second speech is twelve lines long, his third eighteen, and his fifth twenty-four. The opening situation in "Faustus" is striking, but the speech is a soliloquy of sixty-two lines. The hero's third speech is forty lines. This kind of beginning is not our ideal today. Barabas opens his tragedy with a speech of forty-eight lines, and follows it soon after with one of thirty-eight. "Edward the Second" has the best beginning in so far as exposition of conditions pertains, but the whole play is hardly to be Gaveston's play. He dies before the middle. Yet he delivers character-speeches of himself and Edward of forty-eight lines (divided into two speeches) within the first three or four minutes of the action. "Edward the Second" is a marked improvement over its predecessors in the matter of the movement of the dialogue. There are here and there brisk nervous speeches that are not far in quality from some of Shakespeare's middle work; but the first speech, on the contrary, at least in regard to length, is not indicative of a new order.

Richard III naïvely steps out and proclaims his identity like Beelzebub or the tardy clown in the old mummers' play;

"Here comes I, old Beelzebub," or "Here comes I who's never been yet," and his speech like theirs is a recitation.

The "Richard II" tragedy opens with the quarrel and challenge of Bolingbroke and Mowbray. This is in a way a prefiguring of the coming action and somewhat of a character-sketch of Bolingbroke, but we are not further interested in Mowbray and the speeches are long and tiresome.

In "King John" the character of Faulconbridge is brought out pronouncedly in the first scene and the discussion, which is the means, was no doubt interesting to Elizabethan ears, but it falls on ours as long and very unpleasant. I am aware that critics think Faulconbridge the best part of the play and his intensification particularly Shakespeare's addition to the original. And assuredly there is a verve and activity about him, a bluntness, honesty, and loyalty that is refreshing when one thinks of the characterless characters of the old plays; nevertheless, the intricate punning, the long speeches, and the unpleasant subject prove our present criticism just concerning the introduction.

"Romeo and Juliet" begins most spiritedly with the making of faces, biting of thumbs, clashing of swords, clanging of bucklers, and shouts of "Down with the Capulets!" "Down with the Montagues!" But we must, notwithstanding, listen patiently to Benvolio's and the fond old parent's lengthy and intricate, though poetic, descriptions of Romeo. In justice, however, it must be admitted that together the three speeches make only thirty-five lines, and this fact is a remarkable advance on the past. The first division, what we are given to calling the keynote scene

of the play, before the Prince enters, is composed of eighty
lines and almost as many speeches. We might name
Shakespeare a new artist for this fact alone, as I have
remarked elsewhere; but we have imagined his writing all
the first two and a half acts of "Romeo and Juliet" as in-
troduction to the last half of his drama, or as a spirited
remaking of an ancient English imitation of Seneca. How
much he thought of the events, other than those of the
keynote scene, as exposition and not forward-moving story
we can hardly say. This is a commendatory criticism on
his success, but it acknowledges how very limited our
proofs are of Shakespeare's conscious processes. We do
not know that he meant more there than to present dra-
matically Brooke's poem condensed.

But I am reminded that Shakespeare has a fine introduc-
tion to "Hamlet." Yes; in a way, nothing could be bet-
ter. But I am not sure that its excellence did not come
chiefly from a desire to improve the Senecan ghost element
that was already a conventional beginning. The triumph
of the ghost was complete in the fact of banishing the unde-
sirable and the loathsome, and in securing for the most part
only the dignified and the awe-inspiring qualities of such
visitants. Still there is not a little amount of old-fashioned
business left; for instance, the swearing on the sword-
hilt and the "mole" in the ground. Likewise, there is the
usual fault of Elizabethan beginnings—long narration. No
Elizabethan author conquered the exposition through and
through dramatically; and certainly Shakespeare did not in
"Hamlet," but he advanced markedly on his predecessors.
Shakespeare has marvelous keynote scenes; yet his succeed-

ing expositions are, like those of all the dramas of his day, more or less weighted with narration.

The first act of the "Othello" tragedy is of Shakespeare's contriving. In the narrative, Disdemona and the Moor have long been married and living at Venice before the call to Cyprus, and Roderigo is unknown. Moreover, as we have said elsewhere, the catastrophe is entirely different. In Cinthio's story the Moor (unnamed) is a good deal of a coward. He not only slinks from justice finally, but lies in bed while the Ensign, in his presence and according to a plan between them, beats Disdemona to death with a stocking filled with sand, and pulls a rafter down on her to prove an accident. The Moor in the story is therefore a brute, and the Ensign (also unnamed) is a common ruffian. But in Shakespeare's exposition Iago is unmistakably brought out as an intellect and a controlling force, and Othello as a high-minded generous character. The exposition does what it should do—introduces the characters so that what follows is perfectly clear and consonant. We do not expect the action of a ruffian nor the shameful subterfuges of a coward. We expect tragedy. As we have said, the exposition here is the chief subsidiary help to unity. It not only presents the main characters in illuminative speech and action, but gives us a sense of all their past and a keen interest in their future. Their future must grow out of their past, we feel, but we perceive that it is not to grow smoothly. The disturbing presence of Iago is unmistakably felt. When Brabantio says:

> "Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:
> She has deceived her father, and may thee,"

we know that Desdemona will not deceive the Moor with

any deliberate purpose, but what she may inadvertently do or what Iago may make of her actions, we can not say. But we are ready to watch. And when we get Iago's full announcement we are keen. We know what he is going to do, but not what Othello and Desdemona will do. The state of mind of the audience is exactly right. All the main happenings are outlined already beforehand so that the spectator may watch not the course of material events but the course of mental events.

Shakespeare did not escape here, either, entirely the faults of his predecessors. He manages to introduce his retrospective narrative and his character descriptions logically; but they are long; and, for this reason, despite its sprightly stage business, the exposition drags somewhat. It was left for the nineteenth century wholly to conquer the exposition. Ibsen has his retrospective narrative so insinuated into the conversation of his characters that listeners never suspect they are being informed. In this excellence "Ghosts" can never be surpassed. But its superiority results from the ideals of realism paramount in our age. When we find fault with Shakespeare accordingly, we find fault with his age. How much he surpassed his predecessors and his former self is made plain by the advance of "Othello" over all antecedent drama in the possession of unity.

Chapter IX

Unity, the Return Action, and the Underplot

With the choice of "Hamlet" Shakespeare began to select for his tragedies material that contained in itself some help toward unity. The *Amleth* history even in Saxo begins after the good king's death. The Othello narrative begins with almost the bare statement that the marriage had been long consummated. We have realized, however, that the dramatist could have enlarged either way; but that he chose rather to elucidate and concentrate. What story he told, he told in retrospect. Moreover, he advisedly ends his tragedy each time with death—with Hamlet's death, contrary to the story; with Othello's death, contrary to the story; with Cordelia's and Lear's, contrary to both the antecedent story and play. It is evident that·Shakespeare was seeking unity and finality. What shall we say, then, of the very complex action of "Lear"?

The Goneril-Regan-and-Edmund part, together with the subplot of Edgar and Gloucester, is Shakespeare's invention. What could he have meant by all these additions? As Professor Thorndike seems to suggest,[1] perhaps Shakespeare *chose* to involve himself in this intricate structure. It is obvious that he proves himself master. He has given us the greatest simplicity in "Othello," the greatest complexity in "Lear."

[1] "Tragedy," p. 168.

It often happens that when an artist has attained a technic, he lets it show through his work. Shakespeare cannot hold himself free from his fault here, but no one can say that he has not triumphed. Given the problem he set for himself, who could have done better? "Lear" is a combination of Senecan and Elizabethan structures so tremendous and penetratingly tragic that the ordinary person cannot bear it; that is, one who has not been brought up to take his emotions mixed and strong. Few readers have been able to endure the underplot, but it is but the acme of Elizabethan popular tragedy. The plucking out of eyes had been added as part of the catastrophe of "Tancred and Gismunda" in the edition of 1591. Shakespeare uses the event in "Lear" as crisis for the evil schemers, those who did not at first intend more than coldness and neglect toward an impatient provoking old king; but wickedness grows on itself, and these unlovely creatures, Goneril and Regan, attain almost to the frightful visages of the secret, black, and midnight hags that we meet in the next tragedy. That Lear's evil daughters should fall to division and death is the reaction we demand. We could not accept the play without it. Shakespeare shows that he knew the human mind thoroughly even in his most elaborate appeal to it. As spectators we moderns do not like the underplot. It is present, philosophically and structurally serviceable; but before the completion of it we put our hands over our eyes and our fingers in our ears and turn our backs on the messenger who confirms the villainies we have all along suspected. Yet we know as critics and psychologists that the overplot would not affect us as it does without this proof that actual coarse

deeds of hand are only disgusting, not terrific, and are really
negligible. The pitiful and awful thing is the breaking of the
human heart. We watch that with an intensity that notices
not the means that make it plain. It is remarkable that,
despite the seeming intricacy of this great tragedy, the final
effect in one's memory is that of an action baldly simple.
Let us inquire how this effect is brought about.

It is brought about by the restricting of the main action
to Senecan structure. If the "Othello" tragedy makes us
feel that we are watching a rising action, the coming into
expression of all the terrible possibilities of a passionate
nature, surely "Lear" in contrast imparts a powerful sense
of a falling action, the plunging into extinction of a passion-
ate nature through a rash deed that gradually transforms
itself into a futile thought impotent against consequences.
The impression of the structure is as if Shakespeare had
advisedly taken, this time, the other half of the "typical"
Elizabethan play and had devoted his skill to it. The "Lear"
tragedy is concerned with the last days of "a very foolish
fond old man, four-score and upwards." Though there is
much complication, there is really no confusion and no con-
tradiction. The tragic action moves forward logically and
regularly. From the moment of the dividing of his king-
dom Lear falls straight to his doom—rejection and insanity.
The whole play is but the reaction on him of his own deed.
If there be any general crisis to the main plot, it occurs in
the first scene of the first act—an earnest of Senecan form.
The only difference is that in Shakespeare's play the events
are briefly acted out, not merely narrated as in Seneca.
This difference is important to vividness but not to structure.

The "Lear" catastrophe begins at Act III, and, partly reported and partly enacted, runs through the rest of the play. To have Lear awake from his madness and realize that he may be mad again is but to intensify the catastrophe. The episode where Cordelia attempts to save him is but an episode, necessary to the mind tragedy, but unaffecting the course of events; Lear's doom was struck long before and quickly follows after.

The main action of the tragedy, we say, is Senecan, in that Lear, despite opposition, goes on to the completion of his purpose. He is set on finding out who loves him best— as Œdipus to find out who killed Laius. He is warned by all coincidents, as was Œdipus, not to pursue the inquiry. He is, indeed, not only told that he is rushing to destruction, but he knows that he is: he senses his destiny. Impelled by the fate of his disposition (Shakespeare's gods), he flings himself out of doors, determined to know no kind of filial regard but what he has preconceived. His passionate nature craves expression toward the thing he loves and from it. Baffled, his soul recoils upon itself, and, Œdipus-like, tears out its eyes: he yields his wits to his perversity. And this is in a large part his tragedy: to know in the beginning Cordelia's love, but insisting to parade in it, "wot ye, to worst e'en the giver." But, as I said, we must not confuse spiritual action with technical. It is a matter of Shakespeare's development at this time that he so interwove the two in this drama that, though we can readily think them apart, we can scarcely tell them off. We agree in this technical study that the overplot is Senecan, or "Greek"; that Lear goes on to the completion of his purpose, a com-

pletion that brings catastrophe and includes the death of himself, of his tormentors, and of Cordelia. The fact that the catastrophe includes the death of all the principals is an Elizabethan convention.

Since the overplot is a simple reaction, a straight downward fall from activity and a deed, to inactivity and a thought, Lear is the chief struggler, is the protagonist of this drama. Anyone who talks otherwise has not followed the question through carefully, or has another definition for *protagonist* besides that of the chief struggler, or causer of the action. Whoever calls Goneril, Regan, and Edmund the protagonist is thinking of activities and not of the action of a tragedy. This is Lear's tragedy. He causes it; others suffer with him; others also act after him and in his fashion and in accompaniment with him, but they could not have acted exactly thus and with this result had he not acted first. He is the first cause—physiologically, spiritually, ethically, and dramatically. The three daughters are his daughters. Goneril and Regan are as much like him as is Cordelia. Moreover, where Cordelia is most exasperating and stubborn, she is most like her father. Her response to him is characteristic not only of herself but of him—she is her father's child, and her response dramatically is caused by him.

Goneril, Regan, and Edmund together are not the protagonist, nor is any one of them chief in relation to Lear. They work with Lear and in the direction he took are subordinate. They work with him somewhat as Iago with Othello, but not to the effect of converting a thought into a deed, but rather to the effect of converting a deed into a

thought. Hence the difference in the trend of the two plays.
In the beginning of his play Lear in *act* divides his king-
dom and dethrones himself, but he does not in *thought* do so.
He still thinks of himself as king, and, partly and essentially,
deports himself as if he were. But the tragedy of the situ-
ation is that the deed finally reacts on him to the effect of
making him *think* his situation as well as *act* it. The com-
bined thinking and acting result in the cracking of his wits.
This tragedy is a tragedy of realization. Lear the proud,
impatient, insistent, arrogant, the unloving, rash, untamed,
imperious monarch comes to know himself as an "unaccom-
modated man—no more but a poor, bare, forked animal.

If Goneril, Regan, and Edmund are not the protagonist,
and do not inaugurate the action of the tragedy, what are
they, and what is their function? They are surely not the
inciting or instigating force of Lear's action in the same
way as Iago is of Othello's. They do not deliberately set
themselves to work on his mind. Their first action is a reflex
action, as Goneril's speech at the end of Scene 1 testifies.
Even at the crisis-emphasis it is Lear who starts the events:
he insists on staying out in the storm. His impetuous action
is a surprise to his tormentors: and in their cruelty to him
they but actively follow his lead of neglect and cruelty to
himself. Unfilial, they offer as their excuse:

> " 'Tis best to give him way; he leads himself
>
> .   .   .   .   .   .
>
>   O sir, to wilful men
> The injuries that they themselves procure
> Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors:
> He is attended with a desperate train

And what they may incense him to, being apt
To have his ear abused, wisdom bids fear."

The latter part of this speech is, of course, hypocrisy; but
the earlier part is exactly the kind of excuse cruel people
hug to themselves, and is in its psychology intensely true;
hence the tragedy. The Fool makes all this relationship very
plain from the beginning to the end of his part. What an
interesting modification he is of the convention of a chorus!
Goneril, Regan, and Edmund are filial ingratitude *active*—
not actuating, however. From the beginning of the tragedy
Lear is preoccupied with the idea of filial ingratitude; they
are that idea personified. But they are not the actuating
cause of Lear's destruction. That cause is his own passion-
ate pride and caprice. In the pity the dramatist arouses
in us for this tragic character we must not fail to see that
it is truly a tragic character, and not a mere sentimental one
of melodrama. The terrific outline of Lear's disposition
that Goneril and Regan give is to be observed. They are
shrewd and cunning analyzers. Their intellects are not at
fault if their hearts are.

> *Gon.*—You see how full of changes his age is; the
> observation we have made of it hath not been little; he
> always loved our sister most; and with what poor judg-
> ment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly.
> *Reg.*—'Tis the infirmity of his age: yet he hath ever but
> slenderly known himself.
> *Gon.*—The best and soundest of his time hath been but
> rash; then must we look to receive from his age, not
> alone the imperfections of long ingrafted condition, but
> therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and
> choleric years bring with them. (Act. I, sc. I, 291-303.)

Since Goneril, Regan, and Edmund are neither the pro-
tagonist of the action nor the inciting motive, are they the
antagonist? No more than they are the protagonist; that is,
neither singly nor collectively are they in the fundamental
outline of the action the antagonist of Lear. They are rather
the antagonists of Cordelia, or she of them. This fact is
shown not only by the course of the play but by Goneril's
words at the end of Scene 1. That they win physically and
bring Cordelia to death might be interpreted to mean that
they are the chief strugglers in relation to her. Indeed,
they are physically, in so far as the activities of the drama
go; they are the ones who actively engage against her. This
is what they may be considered then; the emphasized (struc-
tural) promoters of the activities within the action. In rela-
tion to Lear they are zealous agents going far beyond his
initiative. They take more of the sovereignty than he dele-
gated, and press home to him the import of his own acts by
carrying them out to the bitter end. What he suggests and
starts, they execute without mercy or remission, both
towards him and towards Cordelia.

Cordelia is surely the antagonist against her father's wil-
fulness—she and Kent are. There is no mistake about the
relationship of the parties at the luminous beginning of the
play. She and Kent openly set themselves against the king's
action and against those whom he has made to be of his
party. Throughout the subsequent activities Kent represents
the opposition. Kent and Cordelia win at last so far as to
see the king abandon his passion and imprecations and in
humility acknowledge his mistake. But what they wished
to do they could not do; namely, save the venerable king

from the tragedy of his own disposition. He pulls that down upon himself unchecked save for their slight success with him by the way of a restorative after his madness. This success is scarcely better materially than a failure, since he so soon loses what he sought and with it his own mind and life. The scene is but the arrest of the catastrophe. Cordelia's part is, therefore, much like that of the antagonists in the Senecan drama. They suffer the tyranny of the protagonists and go down in the action that the protagonists have planned.

Cordelia's represented opposition after the first act, however, is not against her father, but against those who by an unnatural assumption of the relationship established by him have become his tormentors as well as her enemies. She is anxious to secure and save her father. She contends for possession of him against her sisters and Edmund; that is, she sets herself parallel with him against them, as they had set themselves parallel with him against her. She becomes the opponent of Lear's representatives as well as of his first foolishness. No change has taken place in her relation to them, however, except that of active warfare. From the beginning she has been tacitly against them. Goneril, Regan, Edmund, and Albany are representatives of Lear even at the end of the action both by fact and by assertion; for they are "opposites" to all invaders of the British kingdom, his kingdom. Moreover, they win in the conflict. There is accordingly no change in the political relationship of the parties from the beginning to the close of the drama. There is no permanent change except the change in Lear's mind toward himself and his daughters. The structural restraint of the

action makes this drama, as I said, a tragedy of realization. Lear's change toward Cordelia is made known not in the form of a dramatic crisis, but only in the form of an arrest of the catastrophe, a subordinate scene.

The arrest of the catastrophe is repeated in the place where the overplot and the underplot come together; that is, where Albany demands Lear and Cordelia, and Edmund finally repents and sends for them. This small incident, however, is only an after echo of the larger and more beautiful scene where we hope for Lear's complete restoration. Shakespeare's reduction of the turning point of the old melodrama to a mere arrest of the catastrophe is a fine demonstration of his command over his material. The Lear-Cordelia tragedy as Shakespeare presents it is a Greek-Senecan action with a continued downward fall from the beginning.

Technically Cordelia is the antagonist of the action, and technically Goneril, Regan, and Edmund are parallel promoters of the action along with Lear; but fundamentally Lear is not only the real protagonist but also the real antagonist. He is his own worst enemy, and the battle ground of the drama is his nature. Philosophically, it looks as if Shakespeare were coming at the time of the composition of "Lear" to the realization that the most tragic fact in the world is that of a disposition divided against itself. He had very evidently come at any rate to the conclusion that a good return action must be the return of the doer's own deed upon the doer's own head by the doer's own hand, as it were. If someone else "return" the deed, then the story is not done; for there is yet that person's tragedy to be

worked out and the reaction of his deed to be set forth. If the antagonist becomes important, he becomes really a protagonist of a new play, and the former leader is put on the defensive, and the unity of effect is broken. This transfer of dominance occurs in "Julius Caesar" and in "Hamlet" very largely; but it does not occur in "Othello" or in "Lear" —not in "Othello" because of the peculiar condition we have analyzed. Iago is more of an evil idea than a man, and Desdemona is too weak and loving to be an antagonist. The representation in "Othello" is of the insinuation of an evil idea and the growth of it into an evil deed. The reaction of that deed, if not a foregone conclusion with us, is so swift and satisfying that we hardly realize that it is a reaction, but think it part of the catastrophe.

But the reaction in "Lear" is a matter of the whole play; that fact brings unity. A change of dominance does not occur. That Shakespeare worked especially against such a result is shown by the evidence that he modified the accepted story and antecedent play, putting what would rationally be a turning point—the meeting with Cordelia—very late, making Cordelia's a losing part throughout. She does not carry her father to France (as the story has her do), nor does she really stop the falling action of Lear's tragedy (as the old play has her do). Her sweetness and love in Shakespeare's version only break the fall and make the end less unwelcome, make it truly tragic and not merely horrible. The forces that Lear sets in motion against Cordelia and himself win. That the people who are the agent of these forces destroy themselves also is a matter of the underplot. The tragic end of Lear is the direct result of the beginning of

his action. Nothing has changed the course of events. He
has fallen straight from the throne to his death. Had he
kept the throne, none of the evils presented would have
occurred. It is noteworthy for a clear understanding of the
mere structure of the play that Lear's tormentors do not
kill his body: they break his heart.

The underplot of this tragedy is parallel with the main
action, not across it. So far as Goneril and Regan act on
Lear's initiative, they are part of the main tragedy; so far
as they act on their own and Edmund's initiative, they are
part of the underplot. The Goneril-Regan-Edmund love
story and the Gloucester-Edgar-Edmund struggle have to-
gether a progress independent of the overtragedy.   Their
course exemplifies what is sometimes called typical Eliza-
bethan structure; that is, the actors rise from the contem-
plation of wicked deeds to the execution of them and under-
go the reaction that brings death; but it is noteworthy that
even here Shakespeare does not forget his lesson of "Julius
Caesar" and "Hamlet." He brings in no new avenger where
the perpetrators of wickedness are connected with the over-
plot. Goneril and Regan destroy themselves and each other.
It is "the judgment of the heavens" (their own dispositions)
that destroys them, as Albany definitely states. It is only the
subpart of the subplot that allows a human avenger. The
enlivening of the Senecan action therefore, we may say,
is brought about through an Elizabethan addition; but an
addition not like that of "Romeo and Juliet," where one
action is prefixed to another, involving a double protagonist;
not like that of the "Julius Caesar," where the second half
is affixed to the first, for the purpose of bringing the offender

of the first to death; not like the hesitator motive of "Hamlet," involving a reaction on a reaction; not even like the vigorous and intellectual transformation within the action of the Senecan relationship of the confidant.   The Greek simplicity of the main theme of the "Lear" tragedy is offered in all its simplicity; but dramatic emphasis is employed to throw the simplicity out in bold relief, as it were, on a background of non-simplicity.

Shakespeare, the practical writer of plays, knew his audience too well to leave to it a chance appreciation of the great theme.   He had himself risen only by degrees to a conception of what is truly tragic in human life; but he could not wait for his audience to arrive gradually.   If he had waited, his play would have failed.   It was necessary that he bring the audience with him perforce.   Indeed, it has taken later ages some time to appreciate the depths and awfulness of the simple "Lear" action.   To resign power when one is capable of wielding it, when one is capable of being "every inch a king"; to indulge in personal weaknesses and caprice, where one could very well carry the burdens of state and society, and thus prevent evil; to ask for the name and additions of a king without the responsibilities; to demand love and get hate with abuse in return; to give hate and abuse where love is deserved; in short, to wreck one's powers on one's disposition, and realize the fact—this is tragedy, but it is not the kind of tragedy that the mob grasps a conception of easily.   For the unthinking there is needed heavy emphasis, and plays are not written for the closet; at least, Shakespeare's plays were not.   "Lear" is great tragedy and no defense is necessary, even of its Elizabethan em-

phasis; but it is desirable that we understand the function of the various parts.

The entrance-of-the-exciting-force became in the "Othello" drama a large and beautiful scene, gradually prepared for. Because of its elaborateness and the rise to it, it seemingly took the earlier place of the crisis-deed, which, instead, came far along toward the end of the play. The extended introduction necessary to make this scene of the inciting force intelligible occasioned the somewhat slow progress of the first part of the "Othello" action. There is not this first slow progress in "Lear." The introduction prevents. There is in one sense no introduction. We are thrust immediately into the presence of tragedy. The crisis-deed is the introduction. The author of "Lear" has therefore omitted all the so-called first half of the so-called typical Elizabethan action.

Since the protagonist has taken the downward course from the beginning of the play, and has at the beginning performed the crisis-deed, we cannot in the Caesar-Brutus sense talk of a crisis in the third act of the "Lear" tragedy. The middle of this drama is a crisis-emphasis, therefore, simply removed the length of an act from the crisis-deed.

This crisis-emphasis is an artistic thing, an art product, that does not belong to the original story. The chronicles make no mention of Lear's madness. The ballad which relates it is subsequent to the drama in time of composition. The center of the "Lear" tragedy, so far as is known, is wholly Shakespeare's. It is his supreme contribution to dramatic literature in connection with the middle of a play, as the close of the "Antony and Cleopatra" action is his supreme ending. We have agreed that the "Lear" middle

scenes are not a crisis in the story sense; that turning oc-
curred when Lear divided his kingdom. The transformation
in the third act is psychic and personal. The course of
events does not change, but only the mind of the protago-
nist. Though Shakespeare was always of his times, he
rises here to a conception of tragedy, classical, universal,
eternal—that of mortals at strife with the gods, man with
his disposition, where the material outcome matters little,
but the struggle is the tragedy. This is the future-looking
fact in the "Lear" drama. We find Shakespeare following
the idea closely ever afterwards. He more and more neg-
lects the story, and gives us the soul struggle.

Though the last incident of the "Lear" action is an Eliza-
bethan stroke, the material death of the hero, yet Lear dies
with a knowledge of Cordelia's love and of his own mistake.
We said that dominance does not change sides at the middle
of the play, and that Lear continues leader in the real sense;
but it is the broken Lear that compels, that "draws love to a
display of itself." The consequences of his wicked folly
move on from ruin to ruin without any change of action;
though there is a partial change of heart in the protagonist.
Hitherto he has been imperious and selfish, unlovable with
all his love; at the end, as he says, he is a slave of the gods,
"A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man," but—and here
is his triumph if so pitiful a figure can be said to have any
triumph—we, like Cordelia, would at last gather him up in
our arms.

The middle of this play is a group of the most elaborate
central scenes in dramatic tragedy, where the parallel under-

lying of the subplot throws the main action into vivid relief by both contrast and harmony: we see the proudest and most impatient of kings brought to the lowest depths of ignominy, standing helpless before the elements; we see him tearing from his mind all old ideas and beginning to realize the one tragic thought; we hear the bitter babbling of the fool, the mutterings of the pretended mad man, the shrieks of the real one, and here and there the word of the friend, as if the artist were purposely sounding the sweet tone that is to come out in final predominance over the harsh clang of the catastrophe. The middle of this play is a Senecan middle, in that there is for Lear no reversal of fortune, but the first horror is the beginning of the catastrophe. The middle of this play is an Elizabethan crisis-emphasis—Elizabethan in the change of the course of the action of the underplot, and its interweaving with the main story; a crisis-emphasis in the review and reiteration of the event that caused the tragedy. The whole action is neither Senecan nor Elizabethan nor both, but greater, in the revelation of a mental turmoil wherein is accomplished the substitution of one idea for another to the final quiescence of the tormented soul.

Perhaps "Lear" is the beginning of the typical Shakespearean structure, for which all the other dramas have been a preparation. Or, perhaps, and I should not be surprised if this were the truth, there is no typical structural point of any kind in Shakespeare's work, but each play is in some measure a modification of the one just preceding and an advance on the others. Surely Act III of "Lear" is the most remarkable

achievement ever attained in the middle of a tragedy. There is unity in complexity. The unity of the whole drama is secured by keeping the entire main action a return.

In "Lear" Shakespeare had come to a conception of tragedy beyond technic, but offered an example that demanded in the making all the skill an Elizabethan trained and genius-endowed artist could then give. The world will never cease to marvel at the impression this action makes in its complexity. Critics will never cease to analyze. Classicists will never fail to find fault but still to be attracted. Repeated readers of the lines will not escape being swept off their feet now and again and carried into the swirl of enthusiastic acclaimers of the superiority of "Lear" to all other dramas, in its summary of classical and romantic tragedy. But there was in store for Shakespeare in a particular way a further development even than "Lear" represents.

Chapter X

The Outer and Inner Action, Theatrical Devices and Special Scenes

The presentation of a philosophic truth by means of theatrical devices is the eminent structural fact of the "Macbeth" drama. From the point of view of the stage "Macbeth" is the swiftest and most effective of Shakespeare's tragedies and for one unmistakable reason—namely, the clarity of its three actions—its narrative action, its psychological action, and its moral action.

The theme of the narrative action is an historical legend of a usurper who employs assassination, murder, and extreme tyranny; the theme of the psychological action is the incalculability of entertained evil; the theme of the moral action is the gradual self-destruction of a human soul. It would sound neat to say that the narrative action proceeds by retrospective dialogue and directly presented events; the psychological, by asides, monologues, soliloquies, and spectacle; the moral, by characterizations and expressed maxims. But obviously this statement would not be true if the connotation were that the various actions occupied separate scenes which could be set out over against each other distinctly all the time. Obviously the three actions of the three themes proceed for the most part together in the same situations, or practically so. A striking fact about this drama is its extreme brevity in comparison with the rest of Shake-

speare's plays. The evidence is clear that given the story and the psychic and moral ideas some very practical hand set about offering them in as concise and brilliant a form as possible. There are two places where matters lag a little, but the general stage effect is one of stirring dramatic business.

The amalgamation of the outer and the inner action by means of theatrical devices is what will legitimately interest us in this study; for the final impression of this play, as well as of that of "Othello" and of "Lear," is one of unity, despite the truth that critics so tenaciously assert and the ordinary reader so quickly observes on first perusal; namely, that the division which our modern texts mark as the fourth act is weaker than the others. But the failure in "Macbeth," if we call this weakness a failure, is one not of conception as that of "Julius Caesar," nor of procedure, as that of "Antony and Cleopatra," but of detail, the general fault of "Timon of Athens." We will first notice the procedure and the conception, and then take up the faulty detail.

The procedure is largely by devices, we say. There is one general device, of which most of the others are special manifestations; namely, that of objectifying psychological tendencies. The witches represent the evil thought that takes possession of Macbeth's mind; Lady Macbeth represents Macbeth's ambition in which the thought lives; the ghost of Banquo represents the revolt of Macbeth's own mind against itself; and the apparitions shown by the witches upon Macbeth's visit to them represent Macbeth's secret conviction of future failure and political death. It should be borne in mind that by the word *represent* we do not mean

anything strictly allegorical, but that we are speaking of dramatic method—objectification. The advantage of such a device is great. Here, where it is skillfully used, it gives a concreteness of action exceedingly impressive. Spectators are forced to the same philosophical attitude as the dramatist. They are challenged to watch the progress of evil, and, led through a series of stage events, to apprehend a series of mind and soul changes.

The opening is a keynote scene wholly spectacular but of much power. The suggestion is far out of proportion to the number of lines that create it. Whether Shakespeare wrote all the witch parts or not in this tragedy (probably not), no one would take away the first eleven lines. Some critics, though, might wish them put immediately before Macbeth's first speech, with the narrative scene omitted. But in either place an effect is sure. Certainly as they stand they make the narrative second scene less tiring than it otherwise would be; for it can be got over in the afterglow of the first, though a spectator feels a distinct dash to his spirits at Duncan's opening words.

To have the witches come in again after the tamer second scene is clearly a connective device and would not be needed if the narrative were omitted. Because of the superfluity, some critics are inclined to say that the second scene and the first part of the third are not Shakespeare's but an interpolation; the speeches of the witches further along, however, upon Macbeth's entrance, are more than a mere device; they are device become drama, and are unquestionably Shakespeare's work. The onlooker realizes at once what the witches are, and realizes their nature. They are tragic

things, repugnant, but strangely fascinating; "fantastical"—
in Banquo's sense of the word; flitting inhabitants of the
air; in a way, outside man, but with uncanny potency to
enter receptive minds. They are the personified exciting
motive of the play. Before the drama is done and the spec-
tator has seen the last of these creatures, he realizes the
treachery of entertained evil as well as its transforming
power. Macbeth is brought out as a changed man in his
contrasting second interview with the weird sisters. It is
the tragic change that evil brings about that the whole
"Macbeth" drama emphasizes.

Lady Macbeth is obviously more than a mere mind-
attitude personified, but she just as obviously is that, and
performs for the protagonist and the action of the drama
that function. She is the chief of the witches stepped into
Macbeth's home; or, rather, if I may speak as the Eliza-
bethans would very well have understood, in her the trio
of witches is housed, the evil thought is domesticated. She
is Macbeth's ambition. She supplies the courage for the
first deed and leads in the execution of it. After the execu-
tion she has a fading part. When the throne is obtained—
when Macbeth's vaulting ambition has o'erleaped itself and
fallen on the other side into fear—her part is done. Fear
is alien to Lady Macbeth's nature. She rules only the first
part of Macbeth's action. What is left for her, after fear
holds sway, is silence. One might go on to argue that even
the gradual and quiet dissolution of Lady Macbeth is an
evidence of what the author meant her part in the action
to be, that of personified ambition; for just so ambition
dies. But such a contention would be more than foolish.

Shakespeare was not writing an allegory and did not think of his material allegorically, but dramatically. But that is just the point here being made: Shakespeare was presenting, in as dramatic and concrete a way as possible, his conception of tragedy. There is something stirring and dramatically fascinating about the progress of an ambition, however criminal it may be, and there is something tragic about the failure of an ambition, however unworthy. Lady Macbeth is no less a tragic character in this play than is Macbeth, though she is a reinforcing and parallel one, not the chief. It is noticeable that she has not the prominence that Iago has in relation to Othello. She is not the personified inciting force of the entire action; the witches are that. She holds only a part of the play together. She is a device to help make plain the author's philosophy.

This statement seems to be stretching somewhat the definition of device, and we do not mean to maintain the signification long; but we want to see clearly how the whole play is a *devised* action that makes evident a philosophical truth. The names of the principal personages are historical, as we have said, and the general happenings of the action are legendary, but the details are *chosen*[1] and the characterizations are pointed. A special effect is aimed at.

There is nothing more psychologically correct than the words Shakespeare puts into the mouth of his weary and troubled protagonist as a brief reply to the message about the death of the queen. She had been his ambition. That was dead already—years ago it seemed to him—what could the material end signify?

[1] From at least two stories in Holinshed's "Chronicle."

"She would have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word."

What killed Lady Macbeth was that horrible knocking
at the gate.   When the world came back in on the mur-
derers, the futility of their sacrifice was instantly apparent.
Macbeth began to fear; Lady Macbeth, to die—inwardly,
first.   The knocking-at-the-gate is an impressive psycholog-
ical device, come down to Shakespeare as an effective startler
of the conscience since the days of the old Gallican ritual.
It is the *"Tollite Portas"* of the dedication of a church,
where three blows with a staff were given on the door.[2]   A
person concealed within used to slip out *quasi fugiens,* in
dramatic representation of the expulsion of the spirit of
evil.   Shakespeare employs this momentous knocking three
times: in "Romeo and Juliet," in "Othello," and here in
"Macbeth."   In "Romeo and Juliet" there is a happy turn;
for only the nurse comes in on Romeo's concealment.   In
"Othello" the knocking is an extreme relief; it is our first
hope that the hero will come to his senses and that the victim
may yet be saved.   But in "Macbeth" the effect is terrific.
It is the knocking at the gate that killed ambition.   No
visible evil fled at the time, but we see later in the sleep-
walking scene what must have happened psychically at this
time.

The banquet and the sleep-walking scene are Shake-
speare's original contributions to the Macbeth story.   Not
only is the treatment Shakespeare's own, but so far as critics
have been able to ascertain, the fact of the presence of these
details in the course of the story is also Shakespeare's own.[3]

[2] Cf. E. K. Chambers: *The Mediæval Stage,* Vol. II, p. 4.
[3] Ward, Vol. II, pp. 172-3.

If we should carefully examine these scenes, therefore, and the matters related to them, we should be likely to find demonstrated beyond a doubt what was the author's conception of the tragedy of the chronicle he selected to present. That Shakespeare wanted first of all to write an acceptable stage play goes without saying. But why a tragedy? And if a tragedy, why add these scenes instead of others? It is apparent that these are the memorable scenes of the play. They bring out the greatest artistic efforts of performers and are an illuminative comment on the whole action.

The banquet is used as the author's favorite point of structure, crisis-emphasis. The banquet itself is a fine old device. It had been a popular stage setting for a tragic event since the days of the mystery cycles. There the alarming circling question, "Is it I?" "Is it I?" had not failed of intense dramatic effect. At a banquet Cambises had arraigned his wife, whom he meant to kill. And now Macbeth reveals his soul, and its terrible secret to his "admired" guests. Here Shakespeare for the fourth time in his tragedies employs the ghost; but with quite a different effect. His appreciation of the tragic possibilities of the device had developed.

The first time, in "Richard III," he brings on a troop of ghosts for prolonged stage business; their connection with the plot is slight and their use fantastic. In "Julius Caesar" he has the ghost of the "murdered man" confront the assassin (at least so the stage directions identify the apparition) at midnight and when he is alone. The treatment is a distinct change from the original narrative. Plutarch has Brutus see his *evil genius,* and then on the next day be

argued with by Cassius that the apparition was an hallucina-
tion. Shakespeare, we recall, was at the time of the writing
of "Julius Caesar" beginning to be interested in Senecan
ghosts as avengers. That fact may explain why he passed
over unnoticed a chance for a subtler touch than he gave,
though he made excellent use of Plutarch's suggestion. He
used it for enlivening the return action with spectacle, and
for exquisite character embellishment. Nothing could be
better in its way than the late character-sketching of Brutus
in that scene. There Brutus is most lovable, and there occurs
the charming episode of the harp, and the tired boy, and of
the book that the absent-minded philosopher has lost in the
pocket of his gown. That Brutus should be reading on the
eve of a great battle is characteristic of the man, and that he
should see a ghost when sitting alone at midnight attests
as much the "authenticity" of Plutarch's account as the
treatment of the scene attests Shakespeare's gift of natural-
ness. The whole effect, however, is not strikingly tragic.
Whoever put the Senecan ghost into the "Hamlet" play
imposed it on the story. The use there is more intimately
structural, but perhaps less psychologically correct through-
out than the use in "Julius Caesar." Shakespeare's magic
touch on the ghost character is the noticeable fact of the
"Hamlet" supernatural element.

But the "Macbeth" ghost is indisputably a philosophical
thing—whether visible to the audience or not. Whether the
apparition is supposed to be only an hallucination of the
troubled mind or to be simply a ghost indulging in a ghost's
prerogative to remain unseen save by the person particularly
affected, makes no difference to our contention here,—which

is that the use of the ghost in "Macbeth" is clearly a device to bring out a philosophical truth, and, though a theatrical artifice, is an integral part of the whole course of the play. Indeed, it forms, as we said, the crisis-emphasis. The "Hamlet" ghost appears at the crisis-emphasis, but it is there only as an incident of a larger scene. It does not have the same philosophical connection with the crisis of the drama as the ghost has in the "Macbeth" action. The "Hamlet" presence is well prepared for and its connection with the action, though incidental, is obvious; but it does not produce the same tragic effect as its successor in the "Macbeth" crisis-emphasis.

I say successor because the two ghosts are not so unlike as their impressions on us would at first lead us to believe. They are both apparitions of a murdered man; they appear in the crisis-emphasis only to the protagonist; and, while the "Hamlet" ghost speaks and the "Macbeth" one does not, Shakespeare yet takes great pains in the "Hamlet" action to show us that no one but the hero heard the speech of the ghost, as he takes great pains in both cases to show us that nobody saw the ghost but the protagonist concerned. Whether or not the "Macbeth" ghost be only an hallucination, and one that should or should not be presented bodily on the stage, really makes small difference to the final effect of the action.

This statement, though true, seems at first sight somewhat strange and contradictory. Because this fact has not been thoroughly grasped is the reason, I think, that so many critics have gone astray on the analysis of the "Macbeth" action. It is very natural to assert that the difference in the

effect of the "Hamlet" ghost and of the "Macbeth" ghost is the difference in sublimation, the "Macbeth" ghost being the more spiritual. This argument would hold on only the one quality—the silence of the ghost; for in many earlier Elizabethan plays—"The Spanish Tragedy," for instance—the ghost, while it appears to the audience, does not appear to any of the characters, nor does it enter the action of the tragedy. Indeed, in "Richard III" the ghosts appear only while the protagonist and the antagonist are sleeping, and address them only during their dreams. It would seem that the aloofness, therefore, would tend to make those supernatural beings more spiritual than later ones that speak in the action; but we know that such is not the impression. So, too, the difference in the effect of the "Hamlet" ghost and the "Macbeth" ghost is not primarily a difference in the apparitions themselves.

In other words and to be brief, the effect of the ghost-scene in "Macbeth" does not depend upon the ghost alone but upon the response of the protagonist to the ghost. The banquet scene in "Macbeth" is more effective than all other ghost scenes, because the philosophy displayed is more effective, the revelation is clearer as to what is truly tragic in human life. Macbeth's response shows an unmistakable downward trend of the protagonist.

Shakespeare had always conceived of tragedy as a fall—but what kind of fall? A fall from a high office to indignity? Yes. ("Richard II.") A loss of one's crown and a fall before one's enemy on the battlefield? Yes. ("Richard III.") A fall before malicious fate? Yes. ("Romeo and Juliet.") A fall before a wily antagonist and because of the misap-

plied best in one's own nature, a self-imposed death finally? Yes. ("Julius Caesar.") A fall because of conflict between duty and disposition—a duty that brings death to someone else and a disposition that brings death to oneself? Yes. ("Hamlet.") A fall because of a confidant's wicked machinations on a susceptible and passionate nature? Yes. ("Othello.") A fall because of a rash deed springing out of one's most characteristic weakness and reacting on one to the final destruction of both body and mind? Yes. ("Lear.") A fall because of one's own ambition, a fall from natural human kindness to the personality of a tyrant and then a fiend,—a character-fall that destroys, body, mind, and soul? Surely yes. ("Macbeth.")

Now, if this is the proper conception of the "Macbeth" tragedy, and represents, as I think it does, the most lasting impression, then some detailed explanation of the play and the impression that sophisticated and unsophisticated persons alike receive of the structure, is necessary; for this conception that we speak of obviously implies a slant downward from the beginning, and seems at variance with the general academic criticism to the effect that the action is in the form of a pyramid, as it were, running up to the ghost scene and then down to Macbeth's death.

This confusion of ideas comes about, it seems to me, by one's keeping too much to a preconceived notion and not separating philosophy from activities and drama from story. Or, in other words, not realizing that the dramatic action of the Macbeth tragedy is tripartite.

Now, the direction of the moral action is clearly down. Macbeth is a worse man at the end than at the beginning

of the play.   At the beginning he hesitates because of natural human kindness.   But later when he comes to slaughtering innocent babes he is not only catching the nearest way but doing so without debate.   He is morally dead.   Macbeth falls from life to death.   Though at first his moral life is tainted with an evil ambition, it is yet life.   But the tyrant's treatment of Macduff's wife and child reveals a dead soul.   The downfall is steady, moreover.   The moral action is not up and then down, but straight down.   Macbeth continuously falls in his own estimation and the estimation of others from the beginning.   This course is marked by his two speeches: "I have bought golden opinions from all sorts of men, etc." (Act I, Scene 7), and his "I'm sick at heart, etc." (Act V, Scene 3).   He realized, as no one else could, that his life had fallen.   He is at the highest point of his self-respect in the earlier scenes of the play, at the lowest in the later.

We are not left in doubt about the moral interpretation of this tragedy.   The dramatist resorts to his most emphatic device to enforce understanding—Lady Macbeth in the sleep-walking scene. The philosophic intent is here expressed in words.   It is accordingly plain that Shakespeare was putting on the stage not only a theatrical story in a theatrical manner, but was also attempting to reveal his conception of the tragic material.   Lady Macbeth is not only herself, the wife of the tyrant, but is the symbol of his inmost life, his ambition, his soul.   Her perturbation shown when she is without bodily consciousness is therefore all the more appropriate and forceful.   Her talking is what Macbeth's was earlier—tragic incident.   This whole scene (V, 2) may

be considered an enlarged tragic incident, removed some distance from the crisis-emphasis. The tragic fact for Macbeth at the banquet was his foolish babbling; the tragic fact for him later is the same thing—the utter impossibility of secrecy concerning his deeds. The doctor understands the situation.

> "Unnatural deeds
> Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds
> To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets."

But he is abashed at the Queen's revelations, and quickly asserts that the disease is beyond his practice. In his embarrassment he murmurs,

> "More needs she the divine than the physician.
>   God, God forgive us all!"

Lady Macbeth is not a weakling, not so much one as her more physical self, her husband. She goes to nobody with confidences. She asks no comfort. There is something frightful in her reserve. The depth of her unconscious sigh alone reveals her comprehension of her fall. When we first met her she was already on the summit of her aspirations. She said in her first greetings to her lord,

> "Thy letters have transported me beyond
>   This ignorant present, and I feel now
>   The future in the instant."

What remained for her in the course of the play, then, was the fall from that summit to the realization of what she there unwittingly prophesied. She thought she meant only success

and power; she reveals in the sleep-walking scene that she realizes descent and everlasting criminal stain.

The direction of the psychological action is also down. Macbeth has the best command of his mental powers at the opening of the play. There he can think clearly if not vigorously. Although he sees strange things, he can reason about them; and not only about them but about their effect on him himself. Yet—and here is where the two actions start out together—his reasoning from the first is tainted with moral unsoundness. He is presented as already entertaining illegitimate thoughts, and unable to reach independent conclusions in a new experience. The contrast is definitely shown by means of Banquo's reasoning on the same phenomena. Banquo's is made conspicuous. The moral strength of Banquo was deliberatively created by the dramatist for a purpose. The characterization was Shakespeare's addition to the legend, and indisputably serves the purpose of setting out in sharp relief Macbeth's precarious state of mind. He easily confuses issues. The point I wish to emphasize here is that already at the beginning of the dramatic action the mind tragedy has begun. There is no up and down, but just a down to this action.

Macbeth descends, manifestly, from confusion to more confusion in his mental processes. At the end of the action he is in a frenzy of doubt and mistaken confidence. The ghost scene of the play marks, accordingly, not the height of his frenzy (the end of the play marks that) but the beginning of his frenzy. Where confusion passes into frenzy is the middle point in this downward mental course. His course mentally is first chosen confusion, then unchecked

confusion, then unrestrainable confusion.   The appalling
phenomenon in the ghost scene is not the appearance of the
ghost but Macbeth's foolish babbling.   That reveals all.   If
he could have held his tongue, his visitors would have been
none the wiser.   It is loss of correlation between physical
and mental action that the ghost scene records.   Hereafter
Macbeth does not only what he wants to do, but what he
does not want to do.   He acts through fear.   Not only is
this scene "the very painting of his fear," but the succeed-
ing scenes are also.   Every new scene marks continued laps-
ing of judgment.   At each important place Macbeth proves
himself less virile, less of a thinking man than before.   His
talk with the doctor, though very tragic, is very foolish.   His
response to the messenger about the queen's death shows
the depths of his mental fall.   Everything is to him finally
as a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying
nothing.   His immediate last responses to stimuli are but
the reflex throwing about of arms and legs, as it were.
There is no directing mind.   His willingness to fight is not
bravery.

His only hope of safety lay in restrained action, as Mal-
colm earlier pointed out.   Macbeth's unreasoning bravado
of response to the approaching soldiers is imbecile reflex
action.   He is not even reasonable enough to kill himself
as Brutus was.   Macbeth thinks about the matter, but he
reaches the wrong conclusion.   At the last he most con-
spicuously confuses issues.   He insanely tries to believe in
his charm, although he has himself cursed all those that
trust such things.

The direction of the moral action is down, the direction

of the psychological action is down—what of the narrative? Well, that is up and then down—if by "up and down" is meant that the protagonist becomes king in the course of the story, and is later overthrown. It is up—if by "up" is meant a continuation of the protagonist as leader. "Up" and "down," as terms in dramatic criticism, are naturally susceptible of definition. By "down" in the moral action is meant what Macbeth very early comprehended and expressed, "Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill." The protagonist strides on from one bad deed to a worse. I suppose if there really be degree in crime, it is worse for Macbeth to kill his friend and confidant Banquo and to attempt to kill Banquo's innocent son because of jealousy than it is to kill Duncan, who really stands in the way of ambition, however mild he may be; and it is worse, I suppose, to kill innocent women and babes for no reason except pique than it is to kill prospective successors; and it is worse, doubtless, to set a whole nation to arms and to killing than it is to take the life of one man, or even of two men. But this striding forward of the protagonist in evil gives the effect of a continued rise in the activities of the drama.

This rise seems to be an attempt at climax. The protagonist moves forward from the thought of evil to the execution of it; and from one to many evil acts, and he rises not only in truculence but in promptness of execution. Unlike Brutus, Macbeth does not stop with one wicked deed. Each murder as a murder is more reckless and bold than the one before and more directly presented. The first is behind closed doors, the second is outside the house in a dimly-lighted wood, the third is in a neighboring castle. The

tyrant at last in great activity fights with more than one antagonist, kills one, and is in turn himself slain. Moreover, there is not in this play, as in "Julius Caesar," a transference of interest from the protagonist to the antagonist. While Macduff is carefully introduced as the discoverer of Duncan's murder, he is not brought prominently into the sympathy of the audience again until at the end of Act IV, when he resolves to fight the tyrant. The presentation of him previous to that resolution, though somewhat extended, is not attractive. Although we are told that he is noble, wise, and judicious, we do not feel his personality. We realize only that he has fled the tyrant, and confesses to have lost hope. This keeping of Macduff in the background as a personality may have been a deliberate attempt to save the unity of the dramatic action, and keep the interest in Macbeth constantly rising.

It seems that Shakespeare's original plan must have been to have no purely narrative scenes. Whether those present in the play as it now stands were interpolations by him himself later for a special reason, or by someone else still later for a special reason, will never be settled, I suppose. At any rate, whether Shakespeare wrote those uninteresting narrative scenes of Malcolm and Macduff in the second half of the play, or not, there is this to be said for them: they are perfectly clear and withal consonant, even though they are superfluous. It is to be noted that they are superfluous, however, since we should understand all that happens and should be ready for the catastrophe if there were no such scenes interspersed. Macbeth's and the servants' announcements are enough to keep us informed. It is the presence

of these narrative scenes that occasions most of the adverse comments on the "Macbeth" action. They really do not break the upward movement of the piece, however, but are only stumbling blocks to the spectators' interest.

The fault of the narrative scenes, moreover, is not only in the superfluity of their content but in their narrativeness. They lack dramatic device. The first part of the narrative action runs swiftly along in the same devices as the psychological and moral actions, but not so the second part—or, rather, so also the second part of the drama except for the superfluity within it. There is much of interest in the second half of the play—preëminently, Macbeth's continued moral fall and the death of his ambition. These are well given by Shakespeare in the best of the witch scenes, in the sleep-walking scene, and in Macbeth's interview with the doctor. The interest does not lapse in these scenes. But whether there was a deliberate design by Shakespeare to insure the dramatic impression of climax or not, it is impossible, in view of the general comment on the play, to ignore the impression of an up and down in this action.

So far as the mere summary of the story goes, we say, a rise and fall are indicated. The protagonist in the course of the action becomes king and is subsequently overthrown. But, nevertheless, as in the case of Lear and of all Shakespeare's later protagonists, the overthrow is not a matter of ability outside but a matter of inability inside the protagonist. As a conspicuous contrast with "Julius Caesar," it is a notable fact that at the crisis-emphasis the protagonist of the "Macbeth" drama does not grapple with a man antagonist but with a ghost; and at the catastrophe he does not

concern himself so much with his opponent as with the disappointing equivocation of the witches. It is a soul tragedy that is recorded in the central scenes and is consummated at the end of the play, as well as a bodily tragedy. That Shakespeare intended to avoid a change of dominance seems plain.

Moreover, it is to be noted in considering a graphic representation of the action that the murder of Duncan comes very early in the play—in the second scene of the second act. The rise to the first murder is rapid and really occurs in the Introduction. It is not only the rise to this murder that the dramatist evidently means to present, but the rise to the next, and the next as well, where the protagonist is "stepped" in so far, that should he wade no further returning were as tedious as going on. Where the murders begin to be tedious both for the perpetrator and for the audience is where the moral action begins to weigh on the narrative. Where the moral action begins to come out strongest is the place where we begin to lose a sense of rise in the narrative. The moral drag levels the narrative rise. Though Macbeth's second interview with the weird sisters would be as dramatically fascinating to an Elizabethan audience as the first interview or as the ghost scene, yet even the crudest apprentice could not miss the evidence of the moral change. It is the moral and psychological actions outweighing the narrative that give the sense of reversal of fortune near the middle of the play. But there is really no reversal of fortune until the very end of the drama. Macbeth is not sent out of the country as Romeo and Hamlet were; he is not replaced at the middle of the action by a more virile per-

sonality as Brutus was. Materially, he holds his own to the last. Only at the last scene of the last act, where Macbeth loses his head, is he supplanted by Macduff either in interest or in deeds. The narrative action is consequently straight up from the beginning, with a sharp turn only at the end where Birnam wood begins its march to high Dunsinane hill, and Macduff—not born of woman—meets Macbeth. But the psychological and moral actions are straight down from the beginning. Possibly it is the glancing from one action to the others that occasions the optical illusion of a change in the direction of the actions near the middle of the play. We are never confused, though, about the course of the play as a whole. We are aware from the start that Macbeth is to fall, that the psychological and moral actions are in interest to take precedence of the narrative; or, better, that the narrative is but the means by which will be displayed a great mind and soul tragedy.

The weak spot in the latter part of the "Macbeth" drama is not the beginning of the "return" action. The Malcolm-Macduff scene is but the superfluous visible preparation of the antagonist for the final personal combat. The spectator already knows before this scene who is to be the agent of Macbeth's physical death, and the conversation therefore adds nothing new.

The return action in the sense of punishment for evil thoughts and deeds accompanies those evil thoughts and deeds all the time, and conspicuously from their inception. That fact is the philosophy of the whole tragedy. Macbeth's first seriously entertained thought of murder unfixes his hair and makes his seated heart knock at his ribs. His troubled

brain immediately begins to see daggers where none are, and all along in the following deeds to revolt against his will. The crisis for the psychological action occurs in the first meeting with the witches; the rest of the play is a study of the reaction of that thought on the mind that entertains it. The crisis of the moral action occurs in the first murder; the remainder of the play is a presentation of the complete deadening of all reluctance to physical and moral horrors. The crisis-emphasis of both actions occurs in the banquet-scene. The tragic incident that reviews what has gone before and makes doubly sure what is to follow is Macbeth's foolish babbling, supplemented and emphasized later by his wife's revelations. The arrest of the catastrophe comes in early as the witches' pronouncements that occasion a double vain hope in a confused mind. This principle of equivocation operates to the very last, not only seemingly on the mind of the protagonist but on the mind of the audience. And the material catastrophe falls sharply upon the removal of the final support.

We are back now to the question of Shakespeare's original contributions to the Macbeth story besides the mere art of the presentation; and we ask, What is his distinct advance in tragic structure beyond command of theatrical devices? We answer: Advance in the tragic idea that controls structure. The "Macbeth" story is much more rationally connected with the psychological and philosophic actions than is the "Lear" story. The run of the three actions almost indissolubly together gives the remarkably satisfying total effect of the "Macbeth" drama. If it were not for the interpolation of the few superfluous scenes, we might say that the

three actions are never separate, yet always distinct. It is the reasonableness and clarity of the philosophy, above all, though, that conserves the interest. Mere murder itself is not an engaging spectacle except to persons of depraved tastes. But the contemplation of the change wrought in the soul by considered and executed evil is always intensely attractive, because always intensely pertinent to daily living.

That there is also manifestation of advanced theatrical cleverness in the "Macbeth" drama no one would deny. The devices of spectacle, and surprise, and of a continuously threatened and suspended catastrophe were evidently so pleasing as stage effects as to become mannerisms of later imitators. Shakespeare's taste can be called in question perhaps only twice in this matter of twist and surprise, and the lines covering the points in question have by many critics been attributed, with some degree of finality, to other writers.[1] The appearance of the ghost at the banquet could not have been better managed whether as an hallucination or as an "honest" ghost seen only by Macbeth. But the fact that at the crisis-emphasis Macbeth's opponent (Shakespeare's especial contribution to the *dramatis personae*) should be a ghost seems at first thought a little strange in view of our earlier statement of Shakespeare's evolution. We seem to have rounded the circle back to ghostly antagonists that have not much blood in them. It seems like a contradiction to say that Shakespeare's work is most con-

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[1] See preface to Temple "Macbeth," and Ward, Vol. II, p. 172. I should be inclined to consider the Malcolm-Macduff conversation also an interpolated passage of a later writer as much because of the attempt at surprise in the reversion of the sentiments expressed as by any other test except that of general dullness and superfluity.

spicuous for the evolution of the antagonist, and then to say
that in his latest plays the antagonist is of least importance—
to say that the Macduffs, Octavius Caesars, and the
Aufidiuses are of little consequence in the impression the
plays make.

Yet the statements are both true, and are not contradic-
tories. The latest obscurity, or generality, of the human
antagonist is an opposite, not a repetition, of the first ob-
scurity. The latest plays are the expression of a continued
principle highly developed. The earlier obscurity of the
human antagonist is accidental. The later seems intentional
and premeditated. Like Kant, who had to destroy belief
to make room for faith, Shakespeare had to destroy the sign
to make room for the thing signified. There is not less
tragic struggle but more in the later plays. The antagonist
proper is now convincingly within the protagonist, is his
own nature warring against itself. What Shakespeare failed
to make plain in the "Lear" introduction, he made indis-
putably plain in the "Macbeth." The outer symbolizes the
inner action. The whole of Act I is really an introduction
to the tragedy which follows.

The explanation of the early place in the action of the
murder of Duncan is patent when we remember that the
"Macbeth" tragedy is not a study of the rise of a good man
to a horrible deed—"Othello" is that—but the rise of an
ambitious man to a horrible deed and a still more horrible
deed, and so on, with continued and accompanying reaction
all the time in mind and soul. There is not in the "Macbeth"
drama the break between the introduction and the rise to the
crisis as there is in the "Othello," because the "Macbeth"

introduction is itself the rise to the crisis. There is not the same hardly explainable relation between the crisis and the crisis-emphasis as there is in "Lear," because the crisis in "Macbeth" is not thrust upon us unprepared, although it rightly comes very early, since the play is one emphasizing reaction.

The rise of Othello is compelled, is a matter of outside stimulus; hence the reaction is brief and withal satisfying. The fall of Lear is his own doing, though he is continuously pushed on by reinforcing agents. The tragic idea is correct, therefore, but not altogether clear. The "punishment" seems out of proportion to the offense, although the idea of unchecked temper is basal. We have not seen enough of the protagonist's fateful actions before the crisis to take his tragic end unquestioningly. We only hear of his previous actions and only through the mouths of Goneril and Regan after the crisis. We get the tragic idea solely by instruction, as it were, whereas we get the tragic result by sight. Hence a feeling of lack of justice in the result. The introduction of "Macbeth" is therefore so far better than that of "Lear" as it shows the protagonist before the crisis in a rise long enough to assure the spectator that the doer of the deed appreciates his own act. All through the drama the tragic idea is made plain both by instruction and by presentation. We *see* Macbeth rise from thought to deed, and from considered deed to precipitate deed at the same time as we feel him fall from activity of mind and soul to inactivity, from sensibility to insensibility. Suddenly the rise and fall become one in the consummation of merited death.

The rise in deeds gives theatrical effect; the fall in mind

and soul gives tragic effect; the two together give a power-
ful dramatic effect in an action pronouncedly English and
Elizabethan. Although he had come fully to a new concep-
tion of tragedy, Shakespeare, the practical writer of plays,
did not forego in the "Macbeth" drama the stage advantage
of spectacle, or of personal combat on a field of battle be-
tween human adversaries. In other words, he added to the
"Richard III" material a moral reluctance on the part of the
protagonist, and a struggle within the hero's own heart.
This moral action is the most distinguished fact of the
"Macbeth" tragedy. It is what gives the drama its unity
and its superiority over so good a play as "Richard III."
It is the moral action likewise that adds to the embodied
British legend its life beyond life.

Chapter XI

The Philosophic Idea and Climax in Falling Action

One can not mistake the matter. By the time Shakespeare had finished writing "Lear" and "Macbeth" he was preoccupied with something besides story or structure. A philosophy of tragedy had grown upon him. Hamlet had become a mouthpiece for a great deal of moralizing: but Hamlet is a "good" hero, simply placed in the unfortunate position of having his conventional sense of duty clash with his temperament. Othello, though passionate, is also a good hero, primarily led astray by a villain. But Lear is a man in whose nature in itself and by itself dwells tragedy. So is Macbeth, so is Antony, so Coriolanus, so Timon. It was a large and deep conception of tragic action that haunted the mind of the mature Shakespeare.

If the generally accepted chronological sequence of his productions be at all correct, then the following growth is evident: Shakespeare developed from a playwright presenting with informing characterization an historical chronicle of violent deeds to a dramatist presenting great tragic struggle. He grew from a consideration of Elizabethan pathos and sentimentality, criminal boldness and meditative indecision, and of the Italian idea of the gullibility of a passionate nature, to a consideration of disposition at strife with itself. Moreover, this idea of tragic struggle underwent in

his mind a complete circle of evolution. It is interesting to note that while the plays of the last period repeat in a sense those of the earlier, but with a deeper conception of the tragic material—"Macbeth" being a more intense study of tyranny and murder than "Richard III" is; "Antony and Cleopatra," of personal attraction than "Romeo and Juliet"; "Coriolanus," of Roman pride and self-deception than "Julius Caesar"; and "Timon of Athens," of egoism and pyrotechnic passion than "Lear"—in turn, the idea of what is real catastrophe is shown remarkably developed. The philosophy of Hamlet is largely a *questionnaire* put into the play,[1] is a more modern query superimposed upon an old story. While the additions reflect the author's curiosity about the moral responsibility of his hero, yet the tragedy of the completed action resolves itself into mere bodily death—"Good night, sweet Prince, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest." But the catastrophe of the "Macbeth" tragedy is something far different. Hamlet's death is of the body; Lear's, of the body and the mind; Macbeth's, of the body, mind, and soul.

If this fact is not clear in the "Macbeth" tragedy, nothing is clear. If this statement does not express the continued and final effect of its triple action, then the "Macbeth" tragedy is no better than the "Richard III." But if this statement be correct, then Antony, Coriolanus, and Timon may be considered further studies in moral and spiritual tragedy. Now, by "moral" one evidently can not mean anything mawkish or pious, or anything limited to particular deeds,

[1] There is indisputable evidence that Shakespeare went back to an earlier draft of the play and inserted the philosophy at various places.

but that general rightness and oughtness of human conduct which thinking persons apprehend. For a man to fall from a sense of that to utter disregard of it, is to fall in soul as well as in mind and body. And by "soul" we must (in this connection, at least) mean simply those highest phenomena of human life, emotion and intellect; by "spirit," the dynamic tone of emotion and intellect. And by the "falling of the soul and the tragedy of spirit," we must mean (if not more) surely this: the loss of discrimination and the loss of dynamic harmony—in other words, the loss of the right adjustment of emotion to human living.

In connection with Richard III there is no thought of soul, because no thought of emotion. Richard acts without feeling. It is the lack of disturbing emotion in him that fascinates the beholder of the play. Romeo and Juliet solve the problem of emotion for themselves and their families. Their end is reconciling, extremely pathetic, but not tragic in the sense that Macbeth's is tragic. Indeed, neither is Brutus's. He made a great mistake and paid for it with his life; but he thought he was right. His tragedy is a tragedy of mistake of reason, but not of soul.

> "His life was gentle, and the elements
>   So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
>   And say to all the world, 'This was a man.'"

The same statement might be made of Hamlet. The disturbance to Hamlet's emotion came from the outside. He struggled against an unwelcome duty, but finally accomplished it. Exterior circumstances solved the remainder of

the difficulty, his fear of living unhappy in his own esteem.
However that might have resulted for other people and the
kingdom.

> "He was likely, had he been put on,
>   To have proved most royally."

Othello's misadjustment was temporary. It coexisted with
Iago's malicious power, and lasted no longer. The unfor-
tunate man soon saw his stupendous error and rectified it
as best he could. And though he took his own life, it was, in
his sense, "happiness to die." Moreover, he left his enemy
to the judgment of the state.

But Lear, as we have seen, did not altogether solve his
emotional relation to the world. His mind ruined, and his
heart still set on Cordelia's love (when she could come no
more, "Never, never, never, never, never!"), he died, at
strife with the gods even to the end—only more holily in
his 'unreason' than in his reason.

It is his partial victory in the struggle, however, that
places "Lear" with the middle group rather than with the
last of Shakespeare's tragedies. Macbeth, Antony, Corio-
lanus, and Timon carry on a struggle that is a losing one
entirely. For Macbeth there is no hope or right adjust-
ment to living after he seriously entertains the first murder-
ous thought. None for Antony in this play, since he has
already met Cleopatra. None for Coriolanus, likewise, from
the beginning; for he is at cross-fate with events not only
in disposition but in spirit. Timon can find no right way
of living, either—a prodigal always, Timon goes to the ex-
treme in hate and vituperation.

The writing of "Macbeth" brought to Shakespeare's mind a close study of criminal ambition, and of its essential failure. He saw plainly (for he shows plainly to us) that tragedy does not reside in the mere fact of the wrong-doing, but in the resultant struggle. If we could do wrong and not care, as Macbeth says, "we'ld jump the life to come. But . . . we still have judgment here"—that is, 'struggle'—and the struggle is the tragedy that returns to plague the inventor. Not mere punishment in deeds; for such would be easy to take! Would Coriolanus or Antony fear heavy blows? Each has risked his life many times. Each has often given and received defeat in battle. It is a turmoil of soul that forms his tragedy. It is the strife with the gods that puts him down. His own disposition running counter to the world-order defeats him. The spectator feels that this is the immanent tragedy of everyone. Catastrophe comes not alone because of what one does or what others do, but because of what one is and the world is—a strife of will with world, and, since the world is made up of others and oneself, a strife with oneself! Timon demonstrated that go but in twos and there is the world! And if you cannot adjust the relationship, there, then, is also tragedy. Timon could not adjust it save with one man, and that one was compelled to depart quickly lest the adjustment fail. Timon represents the complete transformation of one's most native impulses into the worst self-infecting virus that ever poisoned a man's life—hatred of his fellow men. These conclusions seem like a dreary view of life, but they are not. They are only a view of the tragedy of life. The truth of Shakespeare's dramas is the truth of the world: Nature

will not tolerate extremes. And it seems to be Shakespeare's especial pronouncement that she will not tolerate immoderate, self-centered irascibility—not tolerate hateful spite even toward the hateful. The sequence of Lear, Coriolanus, and Timon forms a tragic emphasis of the theme.

In our absorption with Shakespeare's darker plays we must not forget his comedies and half-comedies. Numerous allegories have been drawn from the fact that Shakespeare ends his career with tragi-comedies. If we cared for the connotation, we might, in the study of structure, also draw an allegory, and that from the last of his tragedies. We might note that Shakespeare apparently abandoned the story of Timon as too bitter for what is rightly and artistically a *play;* and "Coriolanus" the last, therefore, proves to be the most reserved and regular of his tragic compositions, as a composition. But we have spent more than enough time in an excursion on the philosophic principle of Shakespeare's tragedies. What we need to see is that the idea which Shakespeare reached of what is essentially tragic in human life affected both the choice of subject and the structure of his later pieces, the structure in some respects giving way to the idea. For instance, so absorbed was Shakespeare with Antony's ruin that he gave us nothing else in the play.

It was said in a previous chapter that with the writing of "Lear" Shakespeare had come to a conception of tragedy beyond technic. The truth of this statement is evinced by the effect of the "Antony and Cleopatra." It is at once the most typical and the most novel of Elizabethan productions. Its boldness is astounding and its beauty beyond that of either drama or story. It is the most poetic play and to

many readers seems the greatest of the author's achieve-
ments. It is clearly the deepest study of character-present-
ment. As we realized of the "Lear" crisis-emphasis, so we
realize of the "Antony and Cleopatra" catastrophe: it is
the most remarkable attainment of its author in the particu-
lar point of structure. Shakespeare devotes two whole acts
to the elaboration of the fall of the catastrophe, and devotes
the preceding three acts to its preparation. The whole
tragedy of Antony, like that of Lear, is a falling action.
The very first words are

> "Nay, but this dotage of our general's
> O'erflows the measure."

Much criticism has been offered on the violation of the
unities in this drama; and yet the character unity is abso-
lute. There is one all-pervading presence—Antony's Cleo-
patra! The unity of place is broken, if you have in your
mind's eye our stage and the appointments it would need.
If you think of the Elizabethan stage, you remember that a
change of scene was scarcely noticeable. And if you throw
yourself into the spiritual action of the piece, you appreciate
that there are but two places in the world that make any
difference to Antony, and that make any difference to you
as spectator; namely, in Cleopatra's presence or out. Antony
is, however, a doomed man from the beginning, whether
in or out. In truth, he always is in Cleopatra's presence
whether spatially near her or not. She is his space, as he
tragically declares in his first utterances.

Freytag[1] censures Shakespeare for not giving us a scene

[1] *Die Technik des Dramas.* pp. 64-5 with note.

where Antony makes up his mind to return to Cleopatra—
the climax scene, as Freytag thinks it would be. It would
indeed of necessity be a climax scene and not only a crisis.
How, then, could Shakespeare give us it and the great
catastrophe also? The emotions would be the same. Not
only in North, but in Nature's "infinite book of secrecy,"
Shakespeare had read a little. He had found out what a
tragedy is. He had shown us in "Lear" that it is not
primarily a decision but a disposition. The crisis for Antony
had come long before the opening of the play. His meet-
ing Cleopatra was his doom. The desertion of Octavia and
the Battle of Actium are but incidents, as all other scenes
of the play are but incidents, of the great catastrophe.
Shakespeare's Antony did not at any time make a real
decision to return: he always found himself returned.

Shakespeare meant this whole play to be one action.
That purpose is demonstrated by his reserving for late
introduction what would in a less well-considered tragedy
have been put as retrospective narrative at the beginning.
It is not until Act II, Scene 2, that we get a description
of how Cleopatra conquered Antony. Indeed, the play
begins in the midst of her triumph, and we see the lovers
together; then follows their separation; then the description
of how she won him. This reserve is admirable. The
description of Cleopatra in the very midst of Antony's
renewed allegiance with Caesar by the marriage with
Octavia of holy, cold, and still conversation, makes us feel
the inevitableness of his return to the purser up of hearts,
with her "infinite variety." The beginning follows the
crisis. We do not need to see the moment of decision. It

was there before the separation. The first lines of the play gave it to us. Shakespeare had learned from his own book of writings. He did not fall into the mistake of dividing his effect between two climaxes.

Freytag seems to think that Shakespeare's foregoing of the scene was because of a lack of emotional material in both Antony and Cleopatra. I think not. I think his foregoing was because he sought climax at the end of his play. There was every reason why the lesson of "Julius Caesar" should be immediately in mind. I do not believe that Freytag's secondary explanation is true either, that an interest of the poet in Octavius and his sister as representatives of bigger things, a world order, had the determining weight. Shakespeare had been reading lately, too, in the mammoth folio of Elizabethan drama, and had scanned again the record of English preference. He made his offering. And with it, he completes the circle of his own achievement in the evolution of points of structure. He had adopted the catastrophe at the beginning of his career. Now he elaborates it.

He gave the people their favorite scene in its highest form. Death? Yes. Spectacle? Yes. Antony falls on his sword and "quakes and stirs." Then think of the heaving of him aloft to Cleopatra in the monument! Think of the clown with the flowers and the fruit! The queen in her gorgeous robes and diadem! The attendant women with their successive leave-takings! The entrance of Caesar and his train! And yet the total impression is not of spectacle and surely not of disunity. Nothing could surpass the

gradual heightening of the catastrophe. The great master is here presenting a great tragedy of a great man—"the noble ruin of her magic."

If one subtract the mechanical incongruity of change of scene, the total incongruity vanishes. If by the license of the stage we may condense into three hours the events of twelve, why may we not altogether take down the walls of time and space and see tragedy act itself out there and here, then and now? Such, I suppose, was the subconscious reasoning of the Elizabethan authors. And they had the logic of the situation! There is no adequate reason why they should have narrowly limited the imagination. There was on the Elizabethan stage little mechanism to render difficult a change of scene. "Antony and Cleopatra" could be offered as easily as "Lear." When one takes this fact into mind, the violations are nil. There has been much throwing about of brains in the condemnation, but the tragedy stands free, in all the beauty of bold construction—stands more for the future, I suspect, than the past.

In the presentation of this action, Shakespeare shows himself curiously ahead of his times rather than behind them, and also ahead of our times in some respects. Without being facetious one might say that Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra" is a moving picture show of superb theatrical effect and exquisite poetic accompaniment. It reveals a conception of a series of progressive scenes beyond what our petty mechanical world has since imagined. We have today the moving pictures, but not the superb dramatic conception; and we have the written accompani-

ment, but not the exquisite poetry. Imagine, if you will, the effect on the artistic consciousness of our people if, instead of the vapid subscriptions now displayed, there should appear anything comparable to this, beneath a picture comparable to the one these lines explain:

> *Ant.*—Dead, then?
> *Mar.*—Dead.
> *Ant.*—Unarm, Eros, the long day's task is done,
>   And we must sleep.

Or this:

>   "Is it sin,
>   To rush into the secret house of death
>   Ere death dare come to us?"

Or yet this:

>   "Finish, good lady, the bright day is done
>   And we are for the dark."

We must not mistake the fact in a figure. Naturally, Shakespeare thought nothing of machines, and we would not reduce him to our modern cinematograph; but we would, if we could, I am sure, find an accompaniment for our modern cinematograph somewhere near the height of the scenes and poetry of Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra," which is —and critics may be reconciled to the fact as a prescience —moving picture drama of magnificent conception and tragic beauty.

"Coriolanus" is in effect, we say, a summary of Shakespearean tragic structure and an advance in philosophy. The play has most of the dramatist's virtues and few of

his faults. The action is evenly balanced and regularly developed. It presents a double material rise and fall, with a continued spiritual misadjustment. In other words, it presents two catastrophes closely bound together and explained by a prolonged causal catastrophe. Although the hero "shall have a noble memory," as Aufidius promised, yet the memory will always be one of moral and spiritual tragedy. Coriolanus fails to adjust his emotions and hence his deeds to the exigencies of the times. He fails twice over: first when he changes his right deeds to wrong, and second when he changes his wrong deeds to right—'right' and 'wrong' in these instances signifying the opinion of the Roman people.

We must remind ourselves that in this study by 'moral' and 'spiritual' tragedy we do not mean anything superworldly. The matter of the Hereafter, Shakespeare left to the theologians. He set forth only the tragedy of life. Both in "Hamlet" and "Macbeth" he let his protagonist question the great future, but he himself made no answer. The answer of "Coriolanus" is the final answer so far as the world is concerned, and is this: sometimes when we do what the world considers wrong, we fail: sometimes when we do what the world considers right, we fail. Success or failure does not lie for us, however, in the approbation or disapproval of the world, but in the entire approval of our own emotions and intellects. When one's heart is divided, then comes tragic struggle. If Coriolanus had really despised the approval of others and had trusted himself alone as he pretended he trusted, he would never have desired the consulship; and if he had been as superior and cold as he

maintained he was, he would not have yielded to his private sentiments. He falls both times because of wilful misinterpretation of his own nature. He was not large and public-spirited as he set himself up to be—neither for Rome nor against Rome. What he takes for virtue and worthiness in himself are in half their manifestations self-centered pride and spiteful choler.

There is something very noble in despising the applause of the commonalty; but to seek the reward that only the commonalty can give, and at the same time contemn the giver and discredit the gift while seeking it, and to appear to consider as an unwithholdable right what can actually be got only as a free offering from the people—to do this is surely to enter upon a tragic struggle not only with "the many-headed beast" but with oneself at the same time. The picture of Coriolanus, like that of Lear and of Timon, is not altogether attractive—less in some respects than either of the others—but it is large and tragic. The zigzag path to disgrace and ruin is clear cut. The figure plunging down it is commanding.

The spiritual action of the piece is unmistakable. It is catastrophe from the first. Coriolanus is his own "sick man," who desires most that which increases his evil. No one could misconceive the beginning. A worthy man is to fall because of his unworthiness. The character-sketch of him that the First Citizen gives is coldly correct. It lacks only sympathetic appreciation of what is really noble in Coriolanus—a fearlessness in action and an innate preference for deeds rather than words. This sympathy the spectator gives before the fall is done; but a critic who wishes

to understand the tragedy should not miss this first incisive sketch. It was put in by Shakespeare for a directive purpose. Together with the Second Citizen's reply it forms the keynote of the entire play.

> *First Cit.*—I say unto you, what he hath done famously, he did it to that end, though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it to please his mother and to be partly proud; which he is, even to the altitude of his virtue.
>
> *Second Cit.*—What he can not help in his nature, you account a vice in him. You must in no way say he is covetous.

Manifestly what Coriolanus *does* not help in his nature *reacts* as a vice in him. And it reacts from the beginning. The rise that the protagonist effects each time is patently but a swimming with fins of lead. And his activities for popularity are a hewing down of oaks with rushes.

There has been some foolish talk to the effect that Shakespeare shows contempt for the common people in this play. Anyone who has meditatively read the opening scene can not misunderstand. It is Coriolanus's contempt that is set forth. Moreover, the way in which Coriolanus indulges his contempt makes tragedy. What truth there is in his accusations of the mob, is truth for everybody and for all ages. To accuse Shakespeare of pointed disrespect to the common people, is to identify him with Coriolanus. One might as well identify him with Lear. To identify him with any character is to refuse to allow his imagination free play with his selected material.

It is clearly evident that Shakespeare set out to put upon

the boards a tragedy of spirit, not a lesson in morals, nor a moral lesson, but a representation of the misadjustment to living of an imperious character. Even the little that the dramatist changed his historical material shows indisputably, I think, what had come to be his idea of a tragic action.

The choice itself of Coriolanus partly reveals the idea: for there is nothing despicable, or loose, or licentious, or criminal, or insane, about Coriolanus. He is more normal than any of Shakespeare's other late tragic heroes; and yet he is tragic. To some readers, he seems the most tragic; because he most wilfully pulls down disaster on his own head. There was no need of such a tragic end, except the need of Coriolanus's disposition. His desire for preferment was compelling, but the kind he sought was impossible for him. He could not have held it if he had got it, and he could not get it, though so far as mere merit of deed went, he deserved it.

Shakespeare omits and selects so as to increase the impression of the willfulness of the protagonist: for instance, Plutarch says that when Coriolanus understood that his continued despite of the rabble would prejudice the safety of the other patricians, upon a pledge from the tribunes that they would accuse him of only one thing—designing to establish arbitrary government—he voluntarily submitted to trial and offered himself for whatever punishment might be inflicted provided only that the tribunes would keep faith with the senate. They did not, of course, and Coriolanus, being unprepared with an answer to their attack, said the wrong thing, and was banished. Now, in the great scenes that Shakespeare imagines and puts for the third act of

his play, the intolerance and insolence of Coriolanus are
not bated one jot for the sake of Rome and the patricians;
but for the sake only of his mother does he start back to the
market place with a promise to speak more humbly.

Again, Plutarch has Valeria appear only in the second
half of the story. There she, with other women of Rome,
makes a visit to Volumnia and begs her to intercede for the
city. The inspiration as to how to save the people and the
honor of the result belong therefore to her and the other
women, and entail a little episode in the narrative, wherein
the women as a reward for their wisdom are allowed to
build at public expense a temple to the Feminine Disposer of
Fortune. In an early chronicle play all this episode would
have been duly presented; but Shakespeare not only omits
it,[1] but to secure better the unity of the action of his drama,
he introduces the ladies early and makes Valeria's part
entirely subsidiary throughout. He uses her only to make
plain Volumnia's character. He gives the announcing of
how to save the city to the well-tried and otherwise busy
Cominius, and drops the necessary preparatory hint casually,
as it were. This change results in reducing the number of
prominent characters and helps keep the interest centered
on Coriolanus.

Volumnia herself, in truth, is very circumspectly held
down as a secondary character for the sake of unity and
clarity of action. Her early introduction serves the same
end as her subordination; for had she come upon the stage
in all her power only in the second half of the play, her

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[1] He reduces it to an allusion in Coriolanus' speech: "Ladies, you
deserve to have a temple built you," (V, iii, 206-7).

novelty and prominence would have tended to split the action in two; for if she were not introduced earlier, much time would have needed to be spent on her in the second half of the play in order to make her part explicable, and the expansion would have resulted in a slow movement somewhat like that of the Malcolm-Macduff scenes in "Macbeth." Or, if she were treated another way, if character-development of her were neglected for the sake of rapidity in both halves of the play, the spectator would have been likely to misunderstand Coriolanus's feelings at the time of the great change in his deeds that precipitates the catastrophe. Like the "soft-conscienced" people, which the First Citizen talks about, the spectator might have thought that Coriolanus did what he did for the mere sake of mercy or through repentant love for his country.

Shakespeare was careful to introduce in the first half of the play all the important characters of the second half, a provision that lessens the possibility of a misunderstanding. Even Aufidius is thoroughly brought out in Act I in scenes supplementary to the original narrative. Both his great ability and Coriolanus's esteem of him are emphasized so that the subsequent relationship of the two rivals shall appear reasonable.

These changes that Shakespeare made from the original, though in some respects slight, are extremely important. They heighten the responsibility of the hero. What contempt there is of the common people—and there is a great contempt—is part and parcel of the tragedy. An inquiry as to how many of the utterances may be Shakespeare's opinion is quite aside from an appreciation of the play.

This is not a pessimistic drama. If, on the one hand, Shakespeare is not necessarily here to be considered as venting any spleen either on life or on the commonalty in his setting forth a tragic character, on the other hand he is not to be considered as delivering a sermon on the blessings of democracy, or on the horror of carrying war against one's native city. The play is a tragedy of spirit and represents the catastrophe inherent in the way of doing things and omitting to do things. Moreover, this is not a pathetic drama. Shakespeare is not "soft conscienced." He is not asking your pity for Coriolanus, but your understanding of his tragic constitution. Coriolanus fell, not through his mercy or patriotism or a chance conjunction of affairs; he made the conjunction himself, and he fell through the inexorable laws of his own disposition.

Any thinking man may know how a mob will act under certain conditions. The result is not problematic, but is one of the facts of the world. But Coriolanus was not a thinking man. To refuse to reckon on bad results when the conditions are plainly bad is to pull disaster down upon oneself with one's own blind foolishness. "Pray be counsell'd," says his mother,

> "I have a heart as little apt as yours,
>   But yet a brain that leads my use of anger
>   To better vantage."

The combination of a stout nature, proud heart, and small judgment spells 'solitariness'; but when possessed by one who is ruled by an unquenchable lust for preferment in a time that requires great caution and tolerance

on the part of all who would lead, the combination spells inevitable failure. Shakespeare carefully sets forth the times as well as his hero and thus makes the moral and spiritual tragedy clear.

This setting forth of the times occupies what may be called the first and second "rise" of the action—the rise in dramatic activities. Shakespeare had always recognized the English preference for activity on the stage. He gave it in "Lear" as an underplot; in "Macbeth" as devised spectacle; in "Antony and Cleopatra" as multiplicity of changing and gorgeous scenes. "Coriolanus" affords no underplot and no spectacle, and there appears to be an attempt to reduce the number of changes of scene. The liveliness comes from the presence of a crowd, which is especially legitimate in such a play, and from the presented soldierly activities of the protagonist in the capture of Corioli and in the personal combat with Aufidius. These two war scenes are brought together as successive. In the original, as we noticed before, Aufidius is not mentioned until after the banishment. His introduction in the first half serves two purposes: liveliness and unity—a natural and an acquired excellence in Elizabethan drama.

The material action early runs up to the proclaiming of Marcius as Coriolanus, Act I, Scene 9, while the spiritual action drops down to a particular misadjustment when Coriolanus refuses to allow spontaneous praise of him by the mouths of the common soldiers in "acclamations hyperbolical." Heretofore the pride of Marcius has been general, and expressed in general denouncements of the general foolishness of the people; but now his hauteur and disdain

become particular in reference to his own deserts.   He is commendably proud in not wishing so much as one-tenth of the spoils in reward for his services, but he comes near to insulting his commander, when in refusal, he calls the offer "a bribe" to pay his sword; and when with maledictions he peremptorily stops the honest shouts of the soldiers, and implies that they are all hypocrites, he goes too far, as the wise Cominius tells him:

> "Too modest are you;
> More cruel to your good report than grateful
> To us that give you truly."

Act I, then, completed with its ten scenes, serves as an introduction of the characters of all the personages, a first step in the material rise of the protagonist, and as the keynote of the spiritual tragedy with a first definite drop in descent.

Act II serves as the second step in the rise up to the first catastrophe.   The people promise to make the hero consul. It is the peculiar excellence of this drama that the protagonist *rises* to his catastrophe each time.   Shakespeare has conquered here the virtue he seems to have been in pursuit of since the writing of "Lear"; namely, to be able to preserve the interest of the spectator with some sort of rise and yet at the same time convey the general impression of a falling action with increased intensity.   By 'rise' here, we mean that the protagonist succeeds in getting into a kind of harmony with other people, though it is not a spiritual harmony, and succeeds partially in carrying out his wishes.

Act III presents the first catastrophe—the crisis-catastrophe, as it were—the entire break with the Romans. Coriolanus goes so far as to start to resist with a sword the representatives of public order. At last as a compromise between further trial and instant death, he is banished. Coriolanus succeeds only partially, we say, for the people reject him after he proves that he can not do what he has set out to do—humble himself before them. The crisis-deed of Coriolanus is, therefore, not completed. Nothing results from the will of Coriolanus but his disappointment. He does not succeed in becoming consul and overbearing the populace, as Brutus succeeded in ridding the state of Caesar, or as Hamlet in finally getting his revenge, or as Othello in killing those whom he thought he had a right to kill. Coriolanus is more like Lear, enraged because of circumstances and venting his spite in words. He is much like Antony in reaping the aversion of his native city, in slipping down from a place of honor and service in her behalf to one of leadership of a foreign foe. But Coriolanus is most like Antony and Lear in not being able to get the better of his disposition. His pride on the one hand and his intense anger on the other control him. He is, like Lear and Antony, a doomed man from the beginning. Reaction is on him all the time. He wishes to be pre-eminent, but his spirit elicts dislike and final repudiation. One can not be pre-eminent politically without the allegiance of the voters. The populace was the voters. Coriolanus hated and openly despised the populace. He went furthest in expression when he should have been most humble. His mother sums up his crisis thus:

Vol.—   O son, son, son!

   I would have had you put your power well on,
   Before you had worn it out.

Cor.—   Let go.

Vol.—You might have been enough the man you are
   With striving less to be so: lesser had been
   The thwarting of your dispositions, if
   You had not show'd them how you were dispos'd,
   Ere they lack'd power to cross you.

These first scenes of Act III are a true mental crisis for the protagonist. When he goes back to try his humility for a second time, he discovers himself to himself. He sees whether the people respect him more or hate him more, whether he loves his country more or himself more. In his talk with his mother he likewise reveals to the audience her power over him. This is a transition scene (III, 2) to the emphasis of the mental crisis, and, while it leads to that emphasis, it very appropriately also prepares for the final catastrophe. This transition scene has in it the *mot de situation*:

Men.—   Ay, mildly.

  Cor.—Well, mildly be it then. Mildly!

As in "Antony and Cleopatra" the crisis-deed is not shown at all, so in the true sense there is no crisis-deed in "Coriolanus;" for in both these plays the tragic fact is the more disposition of the protagonist than his deeds. Antony's nature, the destructive element in it, was exactly complementary to Cleopatra's being, and the mere fact of his ever coming near to her was his ruin, not any 'geo-

graphical' return he might make. He reverted to her more than once without willing to do so. Plutarch makes this phenomenon very plain, and Shakespeare has unerringly followed Plutarch. Moreover, the dramatist did not propose to tell us a simple love-story, nor yet one wherein jealousy of two women could set the world by the ears. He designed to present the *tragedy,* not of All for Love, nor the World Well Lost, but of the reciprocal destructiveness of personalities. So with Coriolanus, the tragedy— and hence the crisis—is not the destructiveness of deed, but the reciprocal destructiveness of disposition and opportunity. Coriolanus's disposition was exactly set to rebound with tremendous harshness upon the least irritation by the crowd. The mere fact of his attempting personally to plead with the people for himself was his ruin.

The crisis-emphasis presents the face-to-face struggle of the opposing parties—Coriolanus and the people. It is extremely fortunate for the unity of the drama that the mother in the transition prefigures her part as representative of the people later and helps form the tragic incident. The tragic turn of this emphasis becomes a turn down as well as an arrest—a semi-catastrophe: *semi,* because the protagonist is not killed; but *catastrophe,* because the larger part of his life is ended. His Roman life is done.

In the sense in which this action is a falling action, the beginning of the play is the beginning of the reaction. The people at once show their resentment against Coriolanus and propose to kill him. Hence in all the conflicts of Marcius with them there is the under-current of that resolve. Likewise, the great man's contempt for them—for their

pusillanimity and greed and fickleness—is sharply empha-
sized. Accordingly not the banishment (that is a surprise),
but the final catastrophe is what is continuously awaited.
We know, on analyzing our feelings that we did not, from
the first, expect the candidacy for consulship to succeed.
We expected the killing. "Let us kill him." "Is it a ver-
dict?" "Let it be done!" "Against him first: he is a very
dog to the commonalty." These are the expressions that
we have heard and have had in our consciousness from the
beginning. When Coriolanus is not killed, but banished,
every on-looker feels the scene to be not the completion of
expectation, but only the arrest of it. The expectation is
Coriolanus's death. The action leads, therefore, through
the catastrophe-arrest to the end of the play. These scenes
are, however, for the protagonist a true psychic crisis and
crisis-emphasis.

Act IV is a continuation of the tragic emphasis, in that
it reviews the past and sets the action on the rise definitely
toward the final catastrophe. Scene 1 emphasizes the
'solitariness' of the protagonist's temper. Even in his mis-
fortune he would stand alone. He refuses all companion-
ship. Scene 2 continues the emphasis with an old-fashioned
lamentation and railing scene of the women. During the
giving and taking of insults, one of the tribunes in an in-
sincere wish states again the real action of the part of the
tragedy that is past and strikes the keynote of the rest
that is coming:

> "I would he had continued to his country
> As he began, and not unknit himself
> The noble knot he made."

Scene 3 is a connecting scene; and Scene 4 is the great scene of the compact between Coriolanus and Aufidius, wherein the whole spirit of Caius Marcius Coriolanus is brought out—his exulting satisfaction in his past deeds, his personal bravery, his confidence and pride in himself at all times regardless of others, his thirst for preëminence, his chagrin, his spite, his daring hope of revenge. Aufidius is brought out, too, but quite clearly as a character secondary to the protagonist. Shakespeare does not make here the mistake he made with Antony in "Julius Caesar." Aufidius is the reconciled bodily antagonist that is to be once more later the final antagonist, and is to win, but he never for an instant overshadows Coriolanus, except in humble generosity.

The necessarily somewhat slow movement of the conference scene is quickened by the excellent device of a banquet, which the historical source by one or two words affords Shakespeare the opportunity of introducing. Only, this time, in accordance with the hints of the narrative, the banquet is placed behind the scenes, and it is the coming and going of the servingmen that the audience witnesses. Their talk furnishes the necessary information and the favorite Elizabethan comic relief. The tragi-comic scenes in "Macbeth" have been the subject of much controversy; but those in "Coriolanus" go unquestioned for two reasons: they are not out of tone with serious drama, are a relief from great tension as the accompaniment of it. Aufidius invites Coriolanus in friendship into the banquet.

The change of Aufidius later is occasioned inevitably by Coriolanus's innate 'solitariness.' Coriolanus both by habit and nature can not *share*. He always usurps. This usurpa-

tion with its result to Rome and its result to Coriolanus, together with his death, occupies Act V.

The less honorable treachery of Aufidius is in a material sense a reaction of the more honorable treachery of Coriolanus. Aufidius, however, is but a technical antagonist to bring to death the protagonist. The real antagonist in the spiritual action is the Roman people; or, better, Volumnia representing the Roman people; or, better still, human nature. Coriolanus was superior to all but his mother and his native impulse of obedience to her. He had wilfully brought about a situation in which his mother and his native impulse counted toward his spirit as opposing forces. He could not but lose: they outweighed not only revenge but honor pledged, repledged, and boasted of. Act V accordingly brings to an end what is really a spiritual tragedy—a misfit of mind and heart to deeds attempted. This tragedy presents revenge, but very much changed in spirit. Still ugly, but how little ugly, when it begins with such noble sentiments as the forgiveness and admiration of each other, by the two greatest warriors of the time—each noble when the other is not there, both nobler when together! How little ugly, when it closes with a remarkable scene of highest deference to a mother! Coriolanus is once more like Lear in that though he pays the full penalty, he does not seem to be conquered, and his wrath seems not to be given up but simply to melt away in the presence of the one he loves. Shakespeare has twice enshrined this most beautiful of all sentiments, the love between parent and child.

There is a secondary arrest of the catastrophe in Act V, Scene 3, just after the close of Coriolanus's speech to his

mother. Aufidius acknowledges having been moved withal.
But Coriolanus suddenly ends the brief respite by volun-
teering to Aufidius the startling assurance

> "I'll not to Rome. I'll back with you ; and pray you
>   Stand to me in this cause.'   (ll. 198-199.)

This announcement and request are a distinct surprise and
practically end whatever hope there may have existed for
Coriolanus's safe return to Rome, and they start a new
minor suspense. By the words "this cause," Coriolanus
means his justification before the leading men of Corioli.
Aufidius is the chief of those leading men, however, and
he announces immediately his attitude as hostile for the
future; but when Coriolanus appears to speak to the lords,
the audience yet hopes that he will be successful. With
Aufidius's word "traitor" the hope vanishes. This little
incident, necessary to the story, forms in a way a final
small suspense.

The whole drama is really, however, an example of a
suspended catastrophe, as is "Antony and Cleopatra."
Coriolanus is a much better piece of work from the point
of view of a drama to be spoken and acted on a bare stage.
It has a lively series of events for the groundwork of the
scenes, and a positive protagonist, who "builds up" his
catastrophe immediately before the eyes of the spectator.
That is, while the direction of the spiritual action is fixed
from the beginning and is indisputably down, the protago-
nist, nevertheless, moves forward lustily on the upward
slope of destruction. The first catastrophe, or the "crisis-
catastrophe," as we have called it, is therefore really an en-
larged arrest of the final catastrophe.

This drama may from one point of view be considered an example of the expansion of the principal points of the structure of a falling action, as "Othello" may be considered the expansion of the points of a rising action. Coriolanus's greatest activity in deeds is at the opening of the play; Othello's, at the close. The middle scene of the "Othello" action is the definite entrance of the exciting force into the mind of the protagonist; the middle in "Coriolanus" is the definite arrest of the catastrophe. The highest tension in the "Othello" occurs in the scene of the crisis-deed, which is closely joined with the final scene; the highest tension in the "Coriolanus" is connected with the catastrophe-deed. In a large sense, this whole play is the reaction of Coriolanus's spirit upon himself. No one deed can mark the beginning of a spiritual tragedy; hence here, instead, are offered the lively activities of accomplishment in which the protagonist plainly shows his tragic spirit again and again.

Macbeth fell into moral tragedy through mental misadjustment. He argued that since he could carry through an assassination and not be called to account by his fellowmen, he could continue undisturbed in peaceful possession of the benefits. He failed to take into consideration his own mental make-up, which was at variance with the course he set out upon. He was a timid man and he should have acknowledged the fact and not been led away by his ambition in the person of his fearless wife. One's mind reacts "after its kind" at all critical periods, but Macbeth did not reckon on the fact. He was surprised by his own reaction.

So Coriolanus fell into moral tragedy through spiritual

misadjustment to his times. He argued that because of his personal bravery in combats which pleased the Roman people, he could carry through an election to a civic preferment that required great restraint of spirit. But he did not proceed so far even as Macbeth. Coriolanus's first catastrophe results from his inability to restrain his spirit, and his second, from his persistent indulgence of that spirit in a strange use of military prowess. At last he is in utter confusion morally. Coriolanus falls in an immediate conflict of honor with honor, honorable honor with dishonorable honor; but he falls primarily and fundamentally through contempt for the common people. He did not think that contempt of the common people could transform itself in his life into a struggle of honor with honor, a turmoil within his own heart. But it so transformed itself. His spiritual misadjustment to the course he undertook is as clearly evident in the second half of the play as in the first. The two halves are one, through a skillful welding together of the successive activities by careful selection and omission from the narrative source and by a continued demonstration and emphasis of the tragic idea. Dramatic climax is present in the relation the two catastrophes bear to each other: that of cause and effect, or that of successive and cumulative effects of the same cause. In other words, increasingly intense and continued eventuation of character into failure is the action of the "Coriolanus" tragedy. Naturally and easily, therefore, it presents climax in a falling action. Shakespeare had been gradually approaching this achievement since the writing of "Lear."

Chapter XII

Structure

At the risk of tiresome repetition let me acknowledge once more that the technic of drama is hardly more than a set of terms. But so is any other science, or theory of phenomena, almost merely a set of terms. When the terms are once understood and the phenomena represented by them recognized, then the body of knowledge is complete. What remains is application, or practice. The terms used in this book are, I trust, self-explanatory. The object of the study has been to set forth the phenomena that gave rise to the modern theory of the structure of a drama, such a theory, for instance, as Freytag maintains, such a theory as has been outlined in the introduction of this book as the common property of all playgoers. Now, if the points of structure that we pretend to find in Elizabethan drama be anything worth while, be anything essential, they must be found in all good plays, ancient, modern, and Elizabethan.

We have studied here only the Elizabethan; but we remember that the Greeks had a theory of playwriting, and nobody disputes that the moderns have one. A more or less common technic develops and is operative as a theory, whether acknowledged or not, in every age wherein the drama flourishes. In literature, antecedents have a determining influence on consequents whether the antecedents

be invariable or not. General likeness serves in this field for invariability. Some persons have talked as if they thought that each Elizabethan worked in ignorance of antecedents and wrote absolutely by caprice, creating literature blindly. Such was not the case. Although quickly developed, Elizabethan literature was nevertheless developed. There is a great difference between the tentative lyrics of Wyatt and Surrey and the finished sonnets of Shakespeare, between the primitive situations of "Cambyses" and the thrilling scenes of "Macbeth"; the difference, however, is one not of kind but of degree, one of attention and graduated development through forty years or more. A close relationship exists between the first and the last play, a relationship made close by intervening steps in technic. "Tancred and Gismunda" and "Othello" are both Italianate dramas, but the difference in the two tragedies is not a difference that came to existence in Italy and Italian literature. The difference came to existence in England and in the minds of English playwrights. By 1604 an English dramatist had learned how to construct a tragedy at once lively and unified. We have traced in the plays themselves the evidence of a growing knowledge of technic, and have watched the emphasis shift from one point to another until a whole beautiful structure, under the control of a completely evolved philosophic idea, was full in consciousness. It may not be amiss to review now with liberal definitions the points as they appeared.

In the medieval miracle and morality plays Elizabethan audiences became accustomed to seeing, and priestly and secular dramatists became accustomed to presenting, situ-

ation and spectacle making a strong emotional appeal. The situation best liked in serious plays was one of torture and death. With the imitation of Senecan drama came a realization of the advantage of a dominating motive; and with the great popularity of Tamburlaine and the Jew of Malta, following close upon the popularity of Hieronimo, there was forced upon every homely mother-wit the consciousness of the unmistakable superiority of plays with emphasized protagonists to plays without them. The chief struggler and his supreme passion must thereafter be clear in all likable dramas. With the advent of Shakespeare's keen mind and facile pen there came into Elizabethan playwriting a formative power that was destined not only to make Elizabethan drama an artistic thing but to remake and complete the world's conception of tragic action.

Shakespeare accepted the Marlowesque play and set about improving it. To the idea of the emphasized protagonist he added that of the emphasized antagonist and a tragic struggle between them. That this struggle should end disastrously for the protagonist Shakespeare seems to have considered an indisputable convention. He adopted it and finally spent his most beautiful poetry upon it. Greek tragedy had never held to this idea, nor indeed had Senecan. But no soul-wracked Shakespearean protagonist goes forth alive. None goes forth maimed and blind. They all sin, they all struggle, they all die. It is not the sin or not the dying, however, that makes the Shakespearean protagonist of absorbing interest: it is the struggle. Through that shows forth the tragedy. We have seen how the idea of what is tragic developed in Shakespeare's mind from the popular conception of

the villainy of a bragging murderer to the struggle of a spirit out of harmony with its times. Along with this development of philosophic idea went an interesting evolution of points of structure, revealed in manifest emphasis on parts of the action.

At first with attention to the antagonist came increasing art in *portraiture* together with nicer elaboration of situations showing contrast of characters (part of "Richard III" and all of "Richard II"). Next, as if in protest against narrative plays and ancient technic, in the presentation of antagonism complicated by love and fate, appeared unmistakably emphasized, along with fine portraits and contrasting situations, some especially *lively incidents* and very natural sentiments and speech, making *tragic action* for the first time truly *dramatic* ("Romeo and Juliet"). The advantage of a keynote scene was suggested.

A *keynote* scene, as Shakespeare perfected it subsequently in "Julius Caesar," "Hamlet," and "Macbeth," is the first scene of the play, is short, is detached from the succeeding action, contains no very important personage, and is not essential to an understanding of the story, but is withal distinctly helpful and vivifying, striking clearly and brilliantly the tone of the whole piece. In "Romeo and Juliet" and in "Coriolanus" there is all the effect of a keynote scene with the following variations from our definition: As printed in our modern texts, the keynote situation in these two plays does not occupy quite the whole scene, but either slips into or is transformed in the latter part into a character presentment of the protagonist. The structural function of the first hundred-or-so lines, however, remains the same.

Naturally the keynotes vary in pitch and quality as the plays vary. In "Romeo and Juliet" the tone is high and nervous, introducing the empty but fatal quarreling of the two houses. In "Julius Caesar" it is medium in pitch and changeable in quality, as the commoners are silly and the tribunes in earnest. In "Hamlet" it is very sensibly low, somber and dignified. In "Macbeth" it is wholly minor and weird, suggestive of the ill events to follow. In "Coriolanus" it is high without being nervous, and ominous without being weird. The crowds upon the stage at the beginning of "Romeo and Juliet," "Julius Caesar," and "Coriolanus" are as different and individual as single persons are, and yet no one of these crowds ceases for a minute to be a crowd.

After "Romeo and Juliet," perhaps because of attention to the Senecan suggestions therein, probably also because of the course of political events of his time, Shakespeare passed to the retributive idea and an emphasized antagonist. The *retributive idea* as first used by Shakespeare is one of punishment in kind by a human antagonist brought upon the stage and shown as roused to action by the protagonist's chief deed directly presented. As later used, the retributive idea becomes the *reaction of disposition and character*, though there is present at the end of the catastrophe a representative antagonist. Either conception occasions, if not the presentation of that chief deed, necessarily an emphasis of it in a review given when the punishment conspicuously begins. The deed we have called the crisis-deed; and the emphasis of it, the crisis-emphasis.

In the choosing of terms for this study there has been the endeavor to avoid the confusion often found in dramatic

criticism, where no clear distinction is made between phys-
ical deed and mental distress, between crisis-act and crisis-
realization, between the middle of the play as a mere middle
and the middle of the play as a center toward which and
from which important actions flow; and where no clear dis-
tinction is made between crisis and climax.   Climax as a
technical term does not signify crisis, but may signify some-
thing that starts therein ("Lear"), or culminates therein
("Julius Caesar"), or proceeds therethrough ("Othello").

In this book, by *crisis-deed* we shall continue to mean
what we have meant all along; namely, that particular action
performed by the protagonist which when realized and re-
turned upon him proves to be the cause of his death.   The
source of this crisis is always the story.   Brutus's deed is
the blow at Caesar; Hamlet's, the blow at Claudius; Othello's,
the killing of Desdemona; Lear's, the banishment of Cor-
delia and the dividing of his kingdom; Macbeth's, the mur-
der of Duncan; Antony's is not shown; Coriolanus's is not
completed.   The present definition of this technical point,
since the word "crisis" is included in it, will sound strange
to those persons who have always associated the idea of
crisis-deed with only the middle of the play.   I wish to chal-
lenge the habit of polarized thought concerning the term.
The thought is correct in connection with "Julius Caesar,"
but not in the same way with any other of Shakespeare's
tragedies.   Why should one see no further than the Brutus-
Antony action?   Shakespeare himself saw further.   Ask the
ordinary theorist what he understands by crisis, and he will
say, "the turning point in the hero's career," or "that place
in the story where the protagonist's deeds begin to react on

him," or "that place in the course of events where the pro-
tagonist's will comes out strongest and he does the deed
which causes his death." These are good definitions. But,
perverse inconsistency! the application of them is usually
based on a presumption, as is shown by the fact that if you
quiz further as to where this deed occurs you will be told
that it occurs "in the middle of the play"! The theorist has
forgot to look at the phenomena. In Shakespeare's tragedies
dating after the "Julius Caesar," except in the "Coriolanus,"
the crisis-deed is not to be found in the middle of the play,
and in the "Coriolanus" the deed is but a half-deed.

The placing of the crisis-deed at the end of a series of pre-
meditated events occasions a continuous rise in interest until
the deed be reached; but the elaboration of the deed as the
fulfilment of expectation tends to complete the action, and
anything more than emphasis of the deed seems like another
play. There is thus the effect of two tragedies in the
"Julius Caesar"; but after 1600, as we say, Shakespeare is
found to have avoided presenting the crisis-deed in the
middle of the action. "Coriolanus" is the exception that
proves the rule. In "Hamlet" the crisis-deed (physical
blow) is at the end of the play; in "Othello," less than three
hundred lines from the end; in "Lear" at the beginning; in
"Macbeth," off the stage between the first and second scenes
of the second act, presented indirectly through the feelings
of the perpetrators. In "Antony and Cleopatra" the crisis-
deed is not shown at all. The crisis as a psychological fact
for both Antony and Cleopatra occurred before the open-
ing of the play and is narrated in retrospective description
by a subordinate actor later. If a person chooses to con-

sider Antony's last return to Cleopatra as the crisis, there is
still the same phenomenon: the deed is not presented.
Shakespeare avoided presentation of the crisis-event in
this play for one of two reasons: either because he thought
he could not present it or because he preferred climax at the
end of the action. That "Coriolanus" is at once an advance
in philosophy and a summary of Shakespeare's technic is
revealed naturally enough by the middle of the play, where
there both is and is not a crisis-deed presented as the center
of the action. Analysis of the center of that play depends
on what interpretation is put upon the word "deed." If
standing for the consulship without success be a deed, then
there is a crisis-deed near the middle of the play; if failure
to accomplish be not a deed, as Hamlet's failure is not, then
the crisis in "Coriolanus" becomes a mental crisis; and we
get, instead of Coriolanus's success and the result of it, the
result of his disposition, in an incident which, by its turn
upon Coriolanus and his subsequent return upon it, imparts
to those middle scenes the effect of a suspended catastrophe;
it is the suspense of the catastrophe that affords rise and
climax in that play.

Now, there are clearly two conceptions of the term "rise"
as used in dramatic criticism. One is popular, a rise in
interest, occasioned by ever-increasing intensity of effect in
the scenes, which in turn is usually caused by long suspended
expectation. This suspense of expectation we call *climax*.
The other is technical, the working out of the protagonist's
announced purpose into a deed. This working out we call
rise.

It is easy to see how these two conceptions unite in any

analysis of the "Julius Caesar," as far as the assassination; for the scenes increase in interest because of the expectation of the event, and are in themselves the evolution of the protagonists' purpose. But with the completion of the deed, the technical meaning of rise drops off, and the other continues uninterrupted only through Antony's oration and the little scene that follows. With the beginning of Act IV a new interest must be created, not in new people necessarily (though there are new people) but in new expectation and a new course of events. In "Hamlet" the technical meaning of the term "rise" continues to the end of the whole action, reinforced by a temporarily increased expectation created just before and disappointed just after the middle of the play. It is patent, however, that the popular feeling of rise does not continue steadily to the consummation of Hamlet's purpose: there comes in the new interest of Hamlet's safety; but this new interest is not so strong as the desire for Hamlet to do something; and consequently the new element frets rather than intensifies expectation. The inserted episodes by their very excellence break up the interest. Some are consequents of the one purpose, Hamlet's; some of the other, the king's. We must remember, however, that the largest purpose is Hamlet's and that that continues unfilled until the end of the play. There is therefore to an extent the effect of climax sustained to the end. Technically, the reaction comes before the deed is committed. Hamlet is killed before he kills. The reaction begins with the pseudo-deed, the mental-blow in the play-scene. It is this mental crisis, or art crisis, that we hereafter become engaged with as critics of the middle of a Shakespearean play. Having

once conceived the advantage of a mental crisis at the center of the play, and yet continuing to believe that tragedy must end with the death of the hero, Shakespeare clearly had as his problem of structure management of the reaction-half of his typical play, or unity between the two halves.

What he first did was to shorten so much the reaction-half as to secure the effect of total absence of halves, or of "twoness"; in other words, he gained almost complete *unity* by devoting expansion to the rise ("Othello"). What he did next was to omit the rise and devote expansion to the fall, or reaction ("Lear"), thus also gaining unity in the overplot, but through a desire for emphasis endangering unity by a reinforcing underplot. Again, he omitted all underplot and made the rise very brief and intense ("Macbeth")—as intense as the former short reaction part following the former long rise—and succeeded in making the natural rise, coming in from the history, bear the effect of a psychological reaction and a moral fall; but a lack of inspiration in the management of two of the later scenes occasioned the impression of a lack of thorough unity. The next tragedy he made totally an elaboration of a catastrophe ("Antony and Cleopatra"); and the next, of two catastrophes in sequence, both caused by the disposition of the protagonist ("Coriolanus"). This last structure offers concomitant rise, fall, and climax. Following are the correlated data of this evolution with the points of structure defined and cited in the various plays.

The rise in "Othello," we say, gives almost true climax, sustained to within three hundred lines of the end. This rise bears both the popular and the technical interpreta-

tions of rise. It is made up of the clear exposition of
Iago as inciting motive, his full reception by Othello, and
the working of the evil purpose out from Othello's mind
into a deed. Technically, the rise begins at the definite
entrance of the exciting-force into Othello's mind and con-
tinues until the deed is done. Popularly, it begins with
Iago's announcement of what he means to do since he is
not what he is supposed to be, but is something inimical
to the Moor. This interest begins in the Exposition. The whole
rise is thus truly the working of idea out into deed: Iago's
idea and Othello's idea, which become one. The highest
part of the dramatic rise is the immediate transformation
of the idea into the deed; but this is prefaced and made
intelligible by the artificial rise, Iago's machinations to get
himself accepted in Othello's mind as directing force. In
"Lear" there is no rise in the technical sense in the main
plot, although there is one in the underplot. In the first
scene, Lear expresses his purpose to divide his kingdom
in three, and there he succeeds in dividing it—in two.
It is this division that costs him his life. In "Macbeth" the
rise to the crisis-deed performed by the protagonist is short
and intense. The evolution of murder from a thought to an
action is nowhere more luminously shown. We get a
repetition of this evolution in each succeeding murder, ex-
cept that the ascent is quicker and Macbeth himself does
not do the deeds planned. The first murder is, therefore,
the protagonist's "actual" crisis. And the rise to it, the
technical rise. In "Antony and Cleopatra" there is no
rise in the sense of evolution of thought into a deed. What
Antony does, he does by opportunity or the plans and pur-

poses of others. Coriolanus, too, in a way, moves forward on impulses and disposition and on a course of events that he does not initiate; but he, as well as Brutus, Hamlet, and Macbeth—and herein is constituted the peculiar rise of his tragedy—attempts something that he very much wishes to carry through. The difference between him and these other protagonists is that he fails, whereas they succeed. He fails to perform the deed he set out to perform—to humble himself enough to be consul, and is left, therefore, with a crisis in his disposition and a crisis which is half a catastrophe in events at the middle of the action. This state obtains after the crisis-emphasis. Whereupon there is a second peculiar rise, like the first, peculiar in the fact that while Coriolanus moves upward toward a deed pre-willed and expected, he does not do that deed. Moreover, his tragedy results as much from his failure to do as from his willful willing.

The *exciting-force* in a Shakespearean tragedy is the idea in the mind of the protagonist which starts him on his fateful action. Sometimes the exciting-force is personified and works at first as an exciting agent, but it never fails of also being finally a thought in the mind of the protagonist. It is not much different from the old Senecan revenge motive or the lust of the Marlowean protagonists, except that its working out into action is more intimately connected with character. In "Julius Caesar" it is the thought of killing Caesar; in "Hamlet," revenge for a father; in "Othello," the idea of total supremacy, or of revenge changing into the specific idea of destruction of Desdemona; in "Lear," the desire to be king without responsibility and to

depend most on the one of three daughters who loves her father best; in "Macbeth," to be sovereign through fair or foul means; in "Antony and Cleopatra," to be near the loved one though empires fall; in "Coriolanus," in the first half, to please a mother and to be partly proud, and, in the second half, to be partly proud and to please a mother. The exciting-force has a slightly different effect in a falling action from what it has in a rising action.

Emphasis of the fate-making deed either before or after it happens gives opportunity for an enlarged psychic crisis. Shakespeare seized this opportunity in every play after 1600. Our definition of crisis-emphasis, then, remains what we have made it heretofore. *Crisis-emphasis* as used by Shakespeare is a review or anticipation of the crisis-deed. Rescanning or anticipation, instead of perpetration, makes this emphasis in all the plays primarily psychic. It presents a face-to-face meeting of the protagonist and the antagonist either actually or spiritually. In "Julius Caesar," this crisis-emphasis is the Brutus-Antony debate; in "Hamlet," it is the closet scene; in "Othello," the handkerchief scene with its accompanying episodes; in "Lear," it is the storm on the heath; in "Macbeth," it is the banquet; in "Antony and Cleopatra," Antony's soliloquy over his shame (and the two following dialogues—indeed, really all Act III, where Antony is shown again in Egypt, as if he had not left it (Scene 6 is merely a necessary connecting passage forming the introduction to the crisis-emphasis) ; in "Coriolanus," the crisis-emphasis is the elaborated banishment situation, beginning with the discussion in Coriolanus's house where he promises to return to plead with the people, and continu-

ing through the decree, the departure at the gate, and the preparation for revenge. In some adequate way the crisis-emphasis compels a mental survey not only of the crisis but of the action up to that point, and intensifies the meaning by anticipation of the catastrophe through suggestion. Antony, in "Julius Caesar," reviews the work of the conspirators and the events in the life of Caesar for which they slew him. Hamlet brings to the remembrance of his mother her former husband and speaks out about her present life. Othello tells Desdemona of the potency of the lost handkerchief and its relation to their recent marriage. Lear reiterates his bounty to his undutiful children. His mental harrowing is terrific. He is even twice face-to-face with his tormentors—at the beginning actually and during the storm imaginatively. Antony meets both the causers of his tragedy; Cleopatra face-to-face, who conquers him, as she has from the beginning of the play conquered him; and Caesar, by proxy, whose messenger Antony whips, but who is, nevertheless, all the time materially overcoming both Antony and Cleopatra. Coriolanus remeets the angry people and their tribunes and is baited by them to his disaster. For those plays like "Antony and Cleopatra," "Hamlet," and "Lear," where the crisis-deed is omitted altogether or comes at the end or the beginning of the action, the crisis-emphasis in the middle necessarily takes the place of the crisis-deed, substituting a psychic crisis and in turn emphasizing that as well as looking back to the beginning and on to the end. This group of psychic-crisis and crisis-emphasis scenes is usually very beautiful and carefully wrought.

The skillful management of the exciting-force and of the crisis elements makes the "Othello" drama supreme, considered from the point of view of climax in a rising action. The definite entrance of the exciting-force becomes the psychic crisis, the emphasis of this psychic crisis becomes the antecedent emphasis of the crisis-deed, the review and consequent emphasis of the crisis-deed turns out to be the catastrophe, and the play is done and climax secured. It is the securing of climax in the falling action that we must presently discuss.

By falling action is meant, naturally, the opposite of rising action. There is in connection with this term "fall," as well as with that of "rise," a technical and a popular meaning which is sometimes distinct and sometimes fused. Popularly, *fall* means the reverse of success, a drop from power to no power. Philosophically, *fall* means misadjustment. Technically, it means both reverse of success and misadjustment, or the resolution of deed into thought—the realization of failure. By "rise," we said, is meant a gradual and steady approach of the protagonist to a special deed, pre-willed by him, expected by the audience and consistently executed, "consistently" signifying "in accordance with the protagonist's character." In other words, rise is the evolution of idea and character into a deed—Brutus's, Hamlet's, Othello's, Macbeth's; whereas *fall* or *falling action,* is the gradual resolution or dissolution of deed or deeds into thought—characteristic deeds into characteristic realization of consequential failure — Brutus's, Hamlet's, Othello's, Lear's, Macbeth's, Antony's, Coriolanus's, Timon's.

It is just as easy to see how these popular and technical

meanings of fall are present in the second half of the
"Julius Caesar" action as to see how the popular and tech-
nical meanings of rise are clearly applicable to the first
half. So, in the "Hamlet" action: after the characteristic
intellectual crisis-test, and while Hamlet continues hesitat-
ing over the execution of the expected deed, there is the
drop from power and there is the realization of failure con-
sequent on disposition. There is, accordingly, in the "Julius
Caesar" tragedy and to a large effect in the "Hamlet," a
change of dominance near the middle of the play; that is,
there appears a new causer of events, the technical antago-
nist, who for sometime claims the center of the stage and
finally brings to death the protagonist. Both Antony and
Claudius assume immediate control of events and Brutus
and Hamlet are, for a time, retired. There is in the
"Othello" drama no such change of dominance after the
crisis-deed. Emilia, to be sure, brings forward the state-
ments that open the eyes of the Moor, but the Moor is
his own executioner, and the catastrophe is very close to
the crisis-deed. The realization is quick, and the falling
action consequently very short. But the Lear, Macbeth,
Antony, and Coriolanus realizations are no such brief af-
fairs. The "Macbeth" drama, as we have seen, is tech-
nically the reverse of the "Othello." The "Othello" is a
long rise and a short fall; the "Macbeth" is a short rise
and a long fall. Popularly considered, the rise in the
"Macbeth" drama is as is the rise in the "Richard III,"
incidental, concomitant with incident and belonging thereto
and not to the play as a whole. This conception is correct
of the "Richard III" action. What binds that play to-

gether are merely Richard's announcement at the beginning
that he means to be, henceforth, a villain, and his continued
announcements of his particular purposes. Expectation con-
sequently rises and falls episodically with successive ap-
proaches and fulfillments. Somewhat the same statement
may be made of the "Richard III." This conception is
not correct of the "Macbeth" drama, however, if more is
meant than something in connection with stage activities
and the rise in truculence of the scenes. Philosophically,
Macbeth's career is from the beginning misadjustment men-
tally; and after the crisis-deed, it is misadjustment mor-
ally as well as mentally—it is fall. Lear's fall is one long
agonized realization, as Antony's is likewise. Coriolanus's
and Timon's tragedies are spiritual failures; the mere
physical death of either of these two protagonists is unim-
portant, except as the physical death of Coriolanus is the
prime expectation throughout the play.

The suggestion of the catastrophe which stands near the
middle of the action, within the crisis-emphasis group of
scenes, is the tragic incident, which transforms itself some-
times, into the tragic turn. By *tragic-incident* is meant a
particular happening that gathers up in itself significance
from all that has preceded and portends as its consequent
the evil that really follows. The word "consequent" is
used here instead of "consequence" to express the fact that
the happening is itself a sequential incident of the real cause
and is not a full cause of what follows, but rather the occa-
sion. It is usually of minor importance as an event, since
it is not long prepared for and appears somewhat as a sur-
prise. It always helps to emphasize the tragic idea. It re-

inforces and intensifies the feeling of crisis though it is itself not the large crisis-deed. The tragic incident becomes a *tragic turn,* or links with itself a tragic turn, when the direction of what is to ensue is clearly different from that of what has gone before. In "Julius Caesar," after Brutus has ordered the citizens to stay to hear Antony, they join Antony and turn to fire the house of Brutus. When Hamlet has withheld his hand from the king by deliberative act, on impulse a few minutes later he kills Polonius. This unplanned deed, which reveals much, is a tragic turn in Hamlet's affairs. The forcing of equivocating self-defense on Desdemona, who has lost her handkerchief, is a tragic incident but not a turn, since the action after this scene is still up along the purpose of the protagonist. Lear's flinging himself off into the storm—the most foolish and most desperate thing he could do—is a tragic plunge but not a turn; it is only further progress down the way he was already going. In "Macbeth" the tragic incident is Macbeth's compromising display of fear at the appearance of the ghost. Generally the tragic incident in a falling action is not a turn, since the direction of the events continues down. The tragic incident in a falling action usually precedes the heavier emphasis; in other words, the place of the incident is about the same in all the plays, that is, within the crisis-emphasis on the side nearer the crisis-deed. In "Antony and Cleopatra," the tragic incident is Antony's decision to fight by sea instead of by land. This decision, like Lear's impetuous act, is not a turn, but a further plunge. The crisis-emphasis begins in the fact that the decision is made in response to Cleopatra's taunt, and goes on to the failure of

the sea fight and to Antony's soliloquy. The failure of the
sea fight is pre-known. Enobarbus makes absolutely clear be-
forehand the impossibility of success. The battle of Actium
is, therefore, not a turn towards Antony's catastrophe, but
only an incident of that catastrophe, which is already in
progress. In "Coriolanus," however, where the action par-
takes all along of a rise and a fall, the tragic incident, the
standing a second time for consul, becomes a trágic turn,
but of a peculiar sort. For the events that have preceded,
it becomes a turn down, a catastrophe—the end; for new
events it becomes the starting point up; that is, despite
the turn down, altogether the banishment of Coriolanus
serves as an elaborate arrest of the expected catastrophe,
which is the death of Coriolanus. It is the management
of tragic turn in "Coriolanus" that gives to this essentially
falling action the effect of rise and climax; in other words,
the incident of the banishment coming at the end of the
crisis-emphasis acts at once as a tragic turn and an arrest.

The *arrest of the catastrophe,* that device which holds up
expectation of the protagonist's death, easily becomes elab-
orated into a scene supplementing the psychic crisis in those
plays where the crisis-deed begins the action or is ante-
cedent to the beginning. Lear's momentary restoration by
Cordelia is an arrest of the catastrophe, and is presented
as a short scene. In "Antony and Cleopatra" there is for
each protagonist an arrest; for Antony, the loyalty of Eros,
who kills himself instead of his master whom he had prom-
ised thus to serve; and in continuation, Antony's missing
of his own heart immediately afterwards; for Cleopatra
there are the visits of Proculeius and Caesar. Though

changed, these incidents are taken over from the source. There is an excellent occurrence in "Richard III" in the fourth act, somewhat far removed, however, from the final catastrophe; and there is in "Romeo and Juliet" the coming of Paris to the tomb. This incident, though added by Shake-speare, may have resulted, we must acknowledge, from his desire to bring together in mortal combat at the end of the play a protagonist and a representative antagonist, and not from a desire to arrest the catastrophe. What Freytag calls the force of the final suspense in "Julius Caesar"—the an-nouncement of Brutus that he finds it cowardly and vile for one to kill oneself—seems to me to be a rather prepara-tion for the mode of Brutus's death than an arrest of a falling tragedy, since Brutus adds immediately that he bears too great a mind to go bound to Rome. An arrest of the catastrophe for Brutus does occur, however, in the fact that he wins the first encounter in the presented battle. His ar-rest results from the narrative source. In "Hamlet" there is the setting-by of the poisoned cup, an instance of this element of structure which, we have evidence, Shakespeare deliberately embellished as a late fine point of the action. After 1604 Shakespeare not only did not fail to adopt from the source opportunity for the arrest of the catastrophe, but he generally put in also further along in the last act of the play a short incidental *final arrest* like the one in "Hamlet." In "Lear" there is re-created expectation of a happy end-ing by the order Edmund gives to save Lear and Cordelia. In "Othello," to the effect that the audience may experi-ence a brief respite before the death of Desdemona, Desde-mona is allowed to speak after she is thought dead; and

that there may be belief for a second that Othello will not
kill himself there is arranged the incident of taking away
his weapon. In "Macbeth" the force of suspense reappears
a number of times in reference to the prophecy of the
witches. The last occurrence is just before Macduff makes
the fatal announcement of his birth. In "Coriolanus" the
final arrest of the catastrophe is very slight, since the large
arrest of the catastrophe, which occurs in the story, is made
the prime functional point of the structure; namely, the
center of the play, or the crisis-emphasis including the tragic
incident, which there acts as a suspensive turn effecting a
climax.

By climax we do not mean the technical rise, or evolu-
tion of thought of the protagonist into a deed; since in
a number of plays, in "Lear" and "Antony and Cleopatra"
conspicuously, the action is not that of the evolution of
thought into a deed, but rather of the resolution of a deed
into thought; and since in "Coriolanus" the rise is the evo-
lution of the protagonist's purpose into situations only,
where consummation in deed is impossible, and the tragic
fall is continuous and concomitant with the rise, and the
whole action, therefore, becomes the climactic resolution of
character into the realization of failure and the consumma-
tion of death. *Climax* means in our summary, then, what
it has meant all along in our discussion. As a process, it
is the continuing of expectation; and as a product, the sat-
isfaction of continued expectation.

If the dramatic execution of the "Timon" action were as
good as the philosophic conception of it, the "Timon"
tragedy might stand to-day as the greatest of all tragedies.

What it lacks is not dominant idea, but character present-ment and dramatic climax. Timon, as brought before us, is too typical of human nature to be human enough as an individual. But Timon's life expresses well what, from a philosophical consideration, is true tragedy—a falling ac-tion.

The repetition of all our analyses has been made in brief, not only for summary of the points, but to insure clearer understanding of the effect that Shakespeare's philosophy had upon the structure of his plays. Shakespeare's presented crises in his earlier tragedies are deeds, and represent a will-ing on the part of the protagonist; but the philosophy in the "Antony and Cleopatra" and the "Coriolanus," and even the "Timon," is beyond that conception. Fundamentally, after all, it is not what we do that is tragic, but what we are and what we feel—what we do not do, sometimes. A con-flict of nature with herself is what is appalling. When once apprehended in all its significance, it is the grinding of the wheels of the gods that is terrific.

Sophocles attempted to present this conception. Shake-speare attempted to present it. Ibsen has attempted to present it. It is the great conception of tragedy. Shake-speare has the advantage of both Ibsen and Sophocles, how-ever, in that he chose for his material, for the most part, facts, as well as true conception. No philosophical story made-up is ever quite so convincing as fact interpreted phil-osophically. I hold no brief for the historical drama as usually conceived; but it seems fairly evident that what modern serious plays lack is not the facts of science, but the facts of story in the Elizabethan sense of the word of

"occurred affairs of moment." Sophocles also had to an extent the advantage of the moderns in that Greek audiences believed in the material presented and felt the story. Ibsen's tragedies are great, as compositions, surpassing in some minutiæ of technic both Sophocles and Shakespeare; but Ibsen's dramas lack something. It is not truth, for they are truthful. What is it, then? Is it not the immortality of acknowledged ocurrence? We notice that all Shakespeare's tragedies, especially those that are entirely his, are founded on the lives of persons who are recorded as actually having lived. Richard III, Richard II, Romeo and Juliet even, Julius Cæsar, Hamlet, Othello also, and Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra, and Coriolanus. It is Shakespeare's presentation of these real people as they essentially were that fascinates us.

The very most modern revolt against conservatism in problem plays is a stand for naturalness in drama. It seems at first thought that the revolt is against "story." Not so. It is against the artificiality of events "made-up" to display a theory. The dramatist should rather attempt to depict life as it is, regardless of any rounded and definite theory, say the advocates of the new. Modern plays, those of the latest school, the naturalists, do not end: they simply stop off. They purport to be, however, pieces of the real story, the story of life as it is. Ibsen's tragedies are largely polemic. Though Ibsen disclaimed the intention, they leave the impression of having been written to depict life as it should or should not be. Shakespeare's tragedies on the other hand are manifestly presentations of life that actually was. Perhaps these statements seem more epigrammatic

than correct, and we might better say that whereas Ibsen's dramas are of life problems, and the modern naturalists', of life situations, Shakespeare's are of life-deeds, those that were. This at least is true: back of the superb character-drawing in Shakespeare's tragedies and back of the effective dramatic technic there lies also an explanation of their eternal charm, eternal story.

What, then, is a Shakespearean tragedy? Is it a story? Yes; in the sense of "a body of facts of special significance." All Elizabethan dramas were stories. But a Shakespearean tragedy is not primarily narrative. Its action is not narrative, and herein is Shakespeare's distinction from all predecessors. The action of a Shakespearean tragedy is the presentation through stage devices of the issuing of events out of character and the issuing of catastrophe for that character out of those events. This analysis will answer alike for those plays where the catastrophe begins late and comes quickly, where it is dependent on one central crisis-deed, or where it accompanies each and every deed as an immediate response thereto after an earlier characteristic deed, or display of disposition. Character-action is Shakespeare's contribution to the world's dramatic literature. Character-action is Elizabethan tragic technic at its supreme evolution. In a large sense it might be said, for contrast, that Greek drama presents the struggle of man with events super-beings create; Senecan, the struggle of man with events fellow beings create; but Elizabethan, the struggle of man with events his own being creates. Shakespeare has expressed in so many words, as well as in the fact of his own dramatic development, what the conception of tragic action had come to be.

At the close of his greatest elaboration of a catastrophe he says,

> "High events as these
> Strike those that make them."

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